Metalsmith

Fall 1989
Volume 9 Number 4
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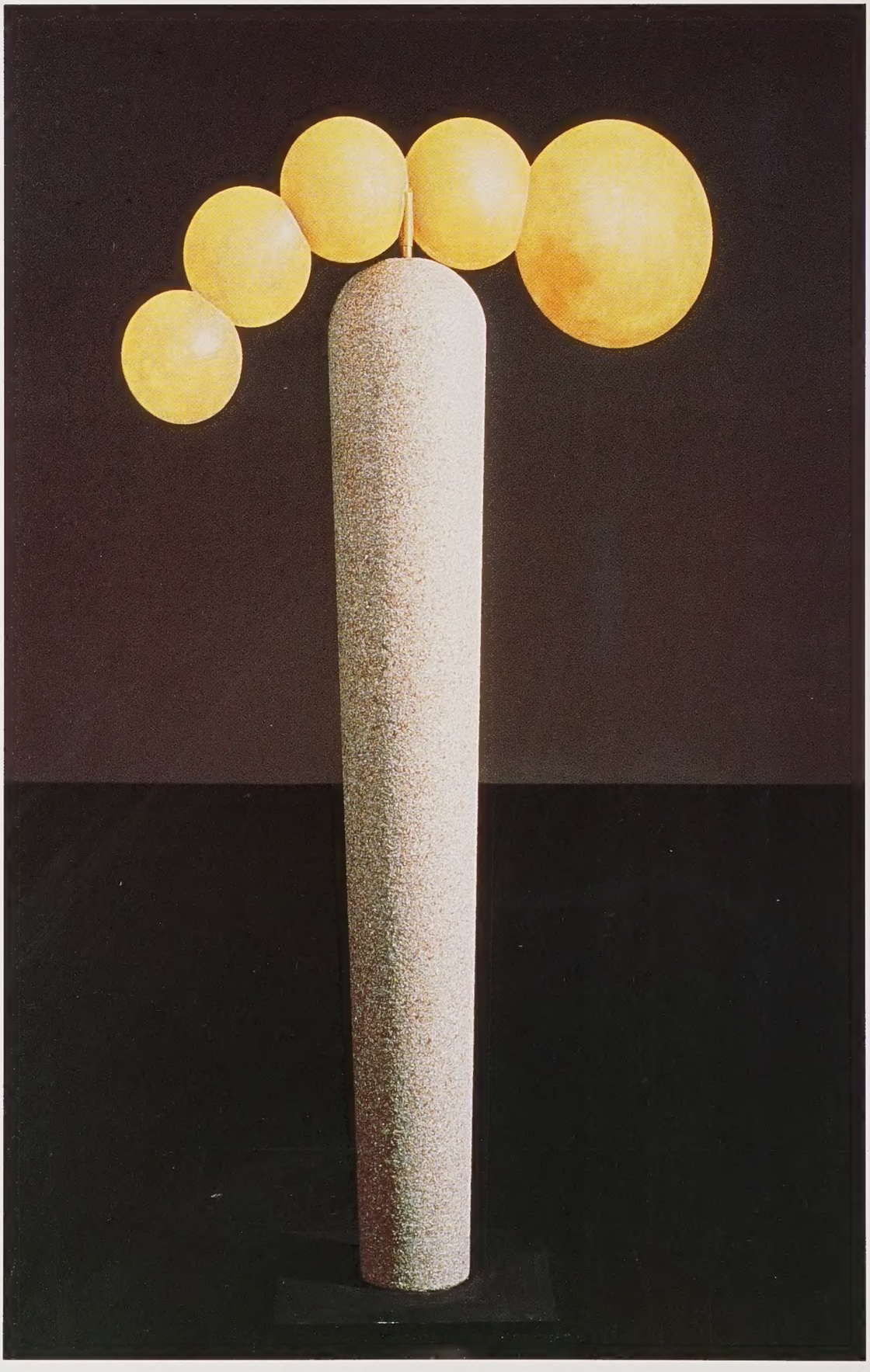

Jonathan Bonner, *Slice*, copper, granite, 41 x 9 x 70", 1989
From the recent exhibition at Heller Gallery, New York; see page 41

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NOVEMBER 2-DECEMBER 2

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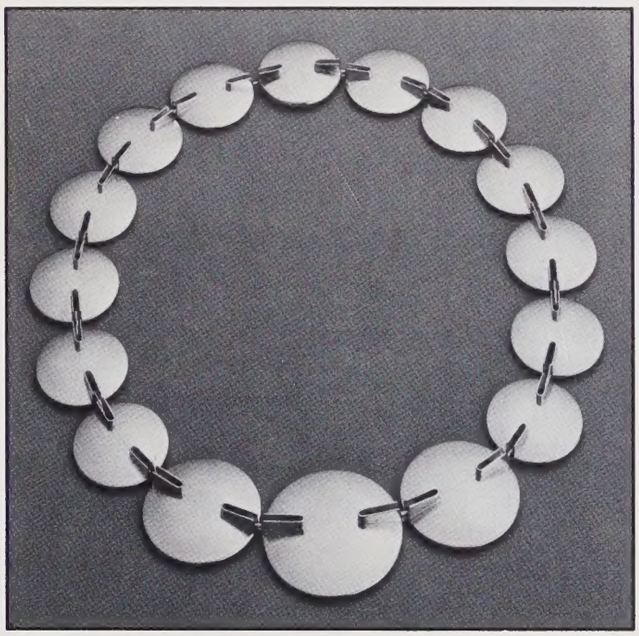

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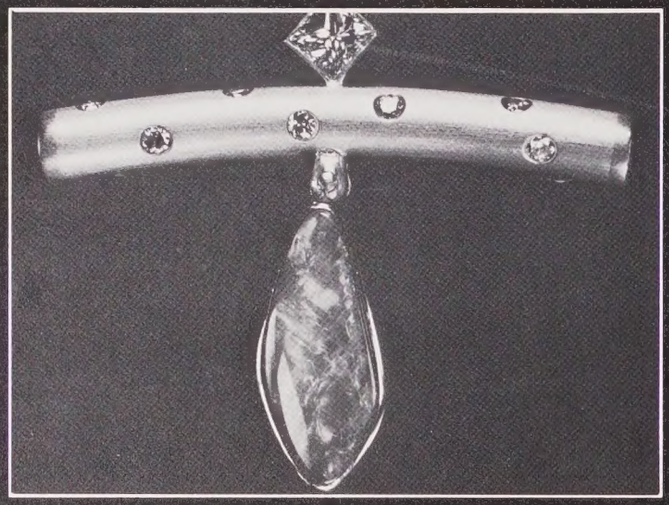

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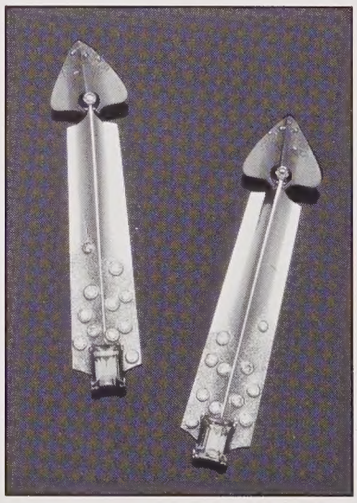

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Metalsmith

Fall 1989
Volume 9 Number 4

Lin Stanionis
Liqueur Cup #2
5½ x 2 x 2"
sterling silver, vermeil
raised, constructed, 1987
see page 30

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Cover
Arch Connelly, *Travel by Sea*, faux jewels and pearls, acrylic on papier mâché, wire and wood, 1984
Collection: Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A., New York
Photo: Eric Johnson, Courtesy JMKAC

The faux jewels that create the shimmering surfaces of Connelly's forms have been salvaged by the artist from ubiquitous department store necklaces, bracelets and belt buckles. He has said of his work, "I want [it] to be the most beautiful thing that I can create at the moment I do it, using all the things I have. My work is purged of ideas." Connelly, like many East Village artists, subverts "high art" by placing the notion of pleasure ahead of meaningful content. See page 22.

Editorial

Not long ago, we received the following letter from Marga Kassimir:
It just came to my realization as how much Metalsmith *has changed over the years, and not all for the better. My first issue is #11 — granted, thin and black and white, but full of enthusiasm. I had to find for a colleague and friend the articles on Japanese alloys and married metals to copy them for her. It suddenly dawned on me, when have I seen in the last year or so any technical papers? Color pictures, yes, pictures of way-out jewelry, yes, interviews with established pioneers in jewelry making, yes, but technical papers giving the process of a particular way of jewelry making for today's use, no. Even updates on previous articles would be much appreciated. There are so many new innovations without bastardizing the art of jewelry making. Even if one would not attempt a certain process, it is nice to know about it. Apart from Tim McCreight's column, might you find a special space for such articles again?*

The sharing of original research into technique and process has been a mainstay of the metalsmithing community since ancient times, and the custom was revived and the practice expanded in the 1960s when metalsmithing became a major subject in universities and art schools. But today some people no longer give workshops to share such knowledge; some won't teach summer school and some refuse to have their research published under their own name.

The cause? It is perhaps an 80's obsession — liability.

While the demand still exists for information exchange in studio metalsmithing, as witnessed by such letters as the one above, communication is drying up, due primarily to fear that writing about such findings might result in a lawsuit. There have already been such cases. And there have been warnings publicly offered to the membership that putting one's research in print is increasingly risky business.

In fact, during the course of the last three issues of *Metalsmith*, we have pulled from publication three successive technical papers, due either to the author's qualms or our own apprehension at numerous warnings throughout the paper that make the endeavour seem unduly hazardous, whether it is or not.

The Society of North American Goldsmiths is a nonprofit, educational organization. Its board is made up of volunteers. Yet, in condoning and advising on the publication of such technical information, no matter how seemingly harmless, they themselves are at risk. The obvious answer to this dilemma is insurance — also an 80's obsession. Beyond the fact that such insurance is expensive and eats into the moneys available for grants to individuals for technical research papers, until recently it has not even existed for publishing in such a small and specialized field. And, of course, insurance does not stop lawsuits, it just relieves somewhat the pain of paying any awarded damages.

It would seem that circumstances beyond our control have caused us to stop publishing technical research papers. Stepping back to examine the problem reveals that the metalsmithing community has been slowly changing to the point where the casual exchange of information, no matter on what level, can no longer be taken for granted as a good thing. While the 80s have been called the information age, there are clearly different types, levels and qualities of information. As the level of information becomes more sophisticated, so must the criteria for its publication. Other professional publications such as *Scientific American* and *Architectural Record* specialize in presenting innovative findings to their readers, yet the information is never couched in prescriptive language. This is the direction that we must consider taking in order to continue publishing important research in a reliable and responsible manner.
Perhaps we are losing a bit of the "enthusiasm," but in exchange we are developing a more substantial contribution.

— SB

Metalsmith

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of North American Goldsmiths

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CONTINUUM: SPAN OF TIME

SEPTEMBER 21 • OCTOBER 12

PHOTO: LYNN HAMRICK

NANCY WORDEN, NECKLACE: MIXED MEDIA

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Letters

Dear Editor:

The 1988 "Young Americans" exhibit did not include my work. The jurors rejected my slides. At first I was upset, later angry. As time passed, I began to question the exhibit, the ACC's jury selection, my own work and my work's place in the craft world.

I was told that had my work been accepted, it would have stuck out like a sore thumb; it did not fit the jury bias. It appeared the jury had selected work many term slick, clean and cold. Michael Dunas, in his review of the show in *Metalsmith*, Spring 89, suggested that the show was a definition for the deco-craftsman. Should the exhibit be a definition of a current trend? "Young Americans" is an important exhibit, supposedly representing the rising American crafts generation. I don't believe an entire country's young generation can be defined into one trend.

In the early 80s, Wayne Higby wrote a review of "Young Americans" in which he explained, "The strongest work is by artists who have had the imagination to find ideas in craft." I am in a post-modern metalsmithing generation that pulls information from many sources, not always craft-related. Many of my colleagues and I are caught in an undefined world. The question remains, should this craft-related group be included in crafts competitions and magazines? Or should they create their own magazine, galleries, museums and competitions? Separation reduces strength. I feel that work that speaks about craft should not be excluded from the crafts world. And if a competition contains a bias, whereby it will not include specific classifications of work, then this should be clearly stated in the call for entries. Some decisions must be made. I hope I will not have to dismiss my craft connection.

— Rosa Silver, New York City

Dear Editor:

We are indebted to Bruce Metcalf for his insights on the early craft movement and his hypothesis on the value of theory, which comprise the last page-and-a-half of his article "On Abondanoning Ignorance" in *Metalsmith*, Spring 89. But this is a four-page piece. Much of the language is in high dudgeon, more appropriate to late-hour, loud delivery and lowered inhibition than the sober columns of the printed page. Some examples from the text: "...one must exercise the mouth to develop the brain." Uh, what about laryngitis? Seems you can lead the hoarse to wonder but you can't make them think? Helen Keller notwithstanding. "The great artists were never inarticulate dullards." True. Nor parking meters. "Thoughtless work is mindless work." Does this apply to the craft of writing as well?

Am I being uncharitably picky about some superficial slips of the keys? What about the message of the article? We should go to the library, we are told, question authority, talk to people. That sounds just like the stuff I usually see on bumper stickers or bus posters. Nothing revolutionary here. The real problem with the article lies in its confusion of the issues. Is abandoning ignorance really the issue? Behind this smoke screen lie some burning questions. What is a great artist? What is great work, and what sort of person produces it? Bruce doesn't seem to have an answer, and neither do I. One thing is certain: you can't spot a great artist in a wagging tongue. It is possible to know a great deal without knowing that we know it. And it's OK not to be able, or not to want, to talk about it. As a worker, I feel that my message is best expressed in the medium of my choice: metal is that medium. Words are...tedium.

Finally, there is a point of disagreement I'd like to address in depth. Bruce talks about "received ideologies." He wants to stretch our boundaries. And he rightly observes that some African jewelry is larger than commercial American jewelry. A reasonable conclusion from this observation might be that those of us whose jewelry inclines to largeness should sell it to the Dinka or the Wodaabe, as that clientele is obviously more sophisticated, what with all those stretched boundaries, not to mention lips, lobes and other body parts that offer the intelligent artist a smorgasbord of boundary-bustin' opportunity. This work is too culture-intensive to be ripped from the ground that nurtured it in order to validate a specious argument. In other words, late 19th-century Japanese watercolors were not a movement against the French Academy, and rightly so. To put it as plainly as I can, when some guy says jewelry ought to be small, that's his opinion. When the jewelers on 47th Street say jewelry ought to be small, that's valuable data *if* it's one's goal to compete in commercial jewelry. But, when the entire Art Establishment says jewelry ought to be large...

It starts in art school, if not sooner. Large! You'll never be taken seriously if you don't work large, the teachers intone. That's authority. Gallery owners, art critics, well-heeled-and-meaning patrons chorus, "If you want to succeed as an artist, work large!" That's power. And when Bruce Metcalf, writing in a very serious art publication, ponderously drones about — horror! — "middle-class" and "culturally determined" definitions regarding the proper size of jewelry, I begin to see fences, chains, boundaries! And I just love to stretch boundaries.

As it happens, I delight in smallness. I adore miniatures, coins, buttons, marbles and those purest perfections of puniness, netsukes and samurai sword furniture. Why are small things not considered worth our attention? Not Art? That is the question, and there lies the challenge. Actually, it is large work that ought to arouse our suspicions as possibly caving in to the values of the Art Establishment. And the largest jewelry isn't made in Africa, but in the U.S. and the U.K., primarily. (See "Building Jewelry," picture essay by A. Paz and C. Sanford, *Metalsmith*, Summer 86.)

According to an old Chinese proverb, the purpose of oratory is not truth but persuasion. And I've never felt lectured to by a work of art.

— Falk T. Burger, New York City

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Art & Technics

by Tim McCreight

Kimberly Willcox
Woman Pin
Copper, silver, resin, paper, rubber and beads,
5 x 1½", 1989

Technical mastery is almost always a pleasure to experience. From opera to country music, from polished marble to welded steel, when something is done just right it has a presence that sets it apart. This power is most obvious to a knowledgable audience, but it usually transcends the necessity for intellectual understanding. I don't know anything about ballet, for instance, but when I see a strong performance, I know it.

This phenomenon is, of course, present in the field of metalworking. In fact, for better or worse, it is one of the most often used avenues of approach by which people come to jewelry and holloware. On one level this is the "Oh, my, look how shiny!" syndrome. What metalsmith has not inwardly cringed when a well–meaning customer has commented on this kind of technical accomplishment? But on another level, there are a lot of pieces that really are dazzling. In museums and galleries I see work that demonstrates such exquisite technical skill that it can take my breath away.

While this is true of almost any field of endeavor, it seems to be an especially tricky point in our field. The metalworking tradition seems particularly vulnerable to the confusions that come with a technical vocabulary that is large and complex. And so pretty to look at too! Whether we're speaking of the delicate inlay of gold into a Persian gun barrel or scores of gems floating in a platinum web, pieces of extreme technical accomplishment exert an almost hypnotic power.

Perhaps it is because of this power and the fact that it has dominated metalworking for centuries, that our work is evaluated principally by that standard. Until recently, jewelry was too often assessed only as precious and well–made objects. Period.

It was in response to the seductive (and deflective) power of technique that a number of jewelers and metalsmiths developed work that was aggressively antitechnical. I'm thinking of Fred Woell's found–object brooches and Robert Ebendorf's wall pieces made up mostly of flattened Coke cans. Such pioneering work of the 60s was sometimes called "Anti–Art," which, of course, missed the point entirely. It was, in fact, work that wanted to be evaluated as art without the Technique Factor getting in the way. These pieces succeeded in breaking the hold of the technical mystique.

I was thinking of all this recently as I became aware of a new link in the evolutionary chain. If we had moved from high tech to low tech, I now see work I'd call no tech. This work may involve traditional techniques and it may not. It may use conventional jewelry materials and findings, and it may not. It is characterized by a freedom from the technique mystique. Artists in this category do not try to impress us with their skill, nor do they repudiate technique as a camoflague for design. They simply make things, using materials, equipment and techniques in any way that makes sense at the moment. The result is a barrage of highly personal, energetic work that is turning up at every level of the marketplace.

Another forum in which this cavalier attitude toward technique shows itself is in the annual conference pin swap. I'm continually delighted by the whimsical and often provocative ideas that turn up here. More than once I've been handed a delightful piece that employed unusual materials with unexpected connections to create a statement that was strikingly poignant. What a lot to accomplish in a piece of give–away jewelry!

This no–tech work often uses nonprecious and found materials. It can rely on simple processes such as roll printing, piercing and gluing. Is there a danger, then, of losing ground? Might our next generation of designers lose interest in more time–consuming techniques and pass them by? Might we create a consumer ignorant of demanding techniques, undermining a clientele that is just begining to emerge? These pedantic and paranoid questions probably have some merit, but, in my opinion, not much. I have too much faith in the integrity of creation and the commitment of these artists. A response I got from one person I spoke with is typical. "When I need to know more, I'll learn it." she said. "This work is selling and so I'll continue to make it. But I have lots of ideas and look forward to the time when I will be pushed into more demanding work."

In the meantime, this refreshing attitude about technique can force each of us to examine our own preciously held conceptions. No evolution is static, nor is it as neatly delineated as I have suggested. We have elements of the high–tech–low–tech–no–tech assortment with us all the time. And as the spotlight of magazine coverage, gallery choice and popular opinion swings from one to the other, it serves us well to remain open to the lessons that each can teach us. Now, where's my epoxy?

Tim McCreight is head of the metals department at Portland School of Art, Portland, ME and a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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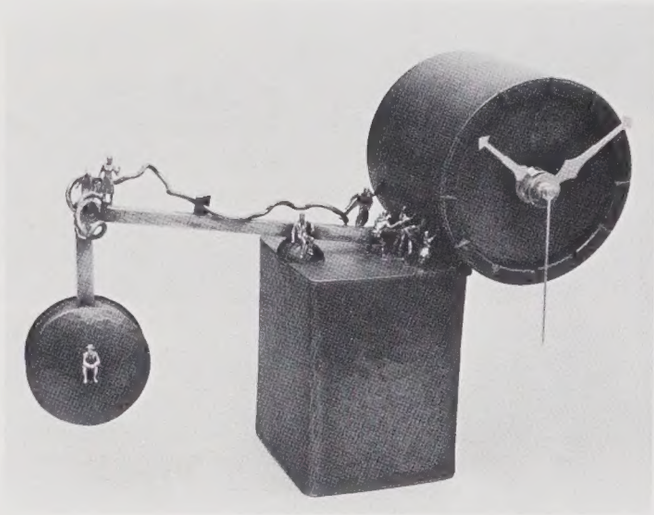

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Recent Sightings

by Bruce Metcalf

Teachers don't instruct enough about business practice.
Teachers are too concerned with fine art.
Teachers don't prepare students properly to work in production studios.
Teachers encourage an arrogance that makes their students unable to stay long enough at any one job.

For a while now, these complaints have been ringing in my ears. They are heard in a number of different forms and formats, from presentations at conferences to magazine articles to casual conversation. And while most teachers I know don't take these complaints too seriously, the implications do tend to nag at us. Yet teachers rarely speak out in their own defense. Perhaps this is because they realize that these questions of competence are often based on gross misunderstandings of the prorities and inherent limitations of the educational system in which they must function. I maintain that it is the structure of higher education, not the incompetence of most teachers, that produces gaps in students' knowledge.

The vast majority of undergraduate jewelry instruction in America occurs in universities and general-education colleges. (For instance, six of the eight B.A. or B.F.A. programs in Ohio are in universities.) Students in universities and colleges cannot truly concentrate on a studio education, nor can they get a rigorous vocational training. Instead, such institutions demand a broad liberal arts experience, where a substantial amoung of coursework occurs outside the jewelry studio. This is not necessarily a bad thing: at least students are literate when they graduate, and they know a little bit about the world. But, in the end, only one-fifth of their education is devoted to their major.

The fact that American teachers cannot prepare their students to become good benchworkers without further training, or to understand business practice, is not entirely of their own doing. These narrow objectives are simply less important than broad technical experience, basic professional practice and a modicum of self-knowledge. For most teachers, there simply isn't enough time offered in the existing structure to cover every single subject well.

Teachers would do a disservice to acquiese to a narrow definition of the field. Many of our critics assume that jewelry and metalsmithing consists of production or custom jewelrymaking and marketing. This is the ultimate reality, they claim. I wish it was so simple. What about holloware, flatware and rendering? What about all the new techniques that have been introduced to the field in the last two decades, such as electroforming, anodizing aluminum, titanium and niobium, plastic casting or photoetching? And since most of us teach in art departments, can we ignore the conceptual demands of the contemporary art scene? In the end, responsible teachers learn that jewelry and metalsmithing are enormously varied disciplines, and we limit this body of information at our students' peril. To serve only one agenda would be to unduly restrict their potential.

No teacher can determine a student's future. Students many become benchworkers, production or custom jewelers, silversmiths, designers, salespeople, artists or any of dozens of other professions. I know jewelry and metalsmithing students who have become gallery owners, furnituremakers, industrial modelmakers and computer programmers. In the face of such diversity, teachers learn a little humility. They cannot afford to act as if students have only one or two options. It is far more important to teach flexibility and to give the student the ability to teach himself.

In the end, the debate is between the short-term (by which most people mean vocational training) and the long-term horizon. Art schools and universities are constantly pressured to provide an education that is immediately useful, that supplies a meal ticket. Parents ask, "Will this education earn my child a living?" Such insistence on an instant payoff ignores the fact that people change, and careers change, too. In almost every field, the training that seemed complete in 1975 is totally inadequate in 1989.

Instead of learning how to do a particular job, students need to learn how to be adaptable. And adaptability comes from learning how to make decisions and learning how to learn. A student learns such flexibility not by mastering a skill but by facing an intellectual, creative challenge. In the limited time that college teachers have available they must teach how to get a handle on a wide range of techniques, mixed with a little of what is going on in the field. But, more importantly, they must teach how to set priorities and solve problems. They must pose abstract questions that have no certain answer, that demand that the student look inside himself at his own needs and desires before the resolution becomes clear. In doing so, the student learns how to solve different problems while staying true to himself. The process may appear silly and impractical to an observer who thinks education consists of learning how to set diamonds and keep accounts, but it gives the student skills that are far more important in the long run.

The good students will learn. I believe that most teachers despite being faced with the task of providing a good education, often by themselves, in an improbably short amount of time, are doing all right. There are quite a few innovative young jewelers in the United States today who are products of the educational system, and their work is having a greater impact in the mass market every year. The diversity and quality of their work stands as proof of a job well done.

Bruce Metcalf teaches jewelry and metalsmithing at Kent State University and writes a regular column for Metalsmith.

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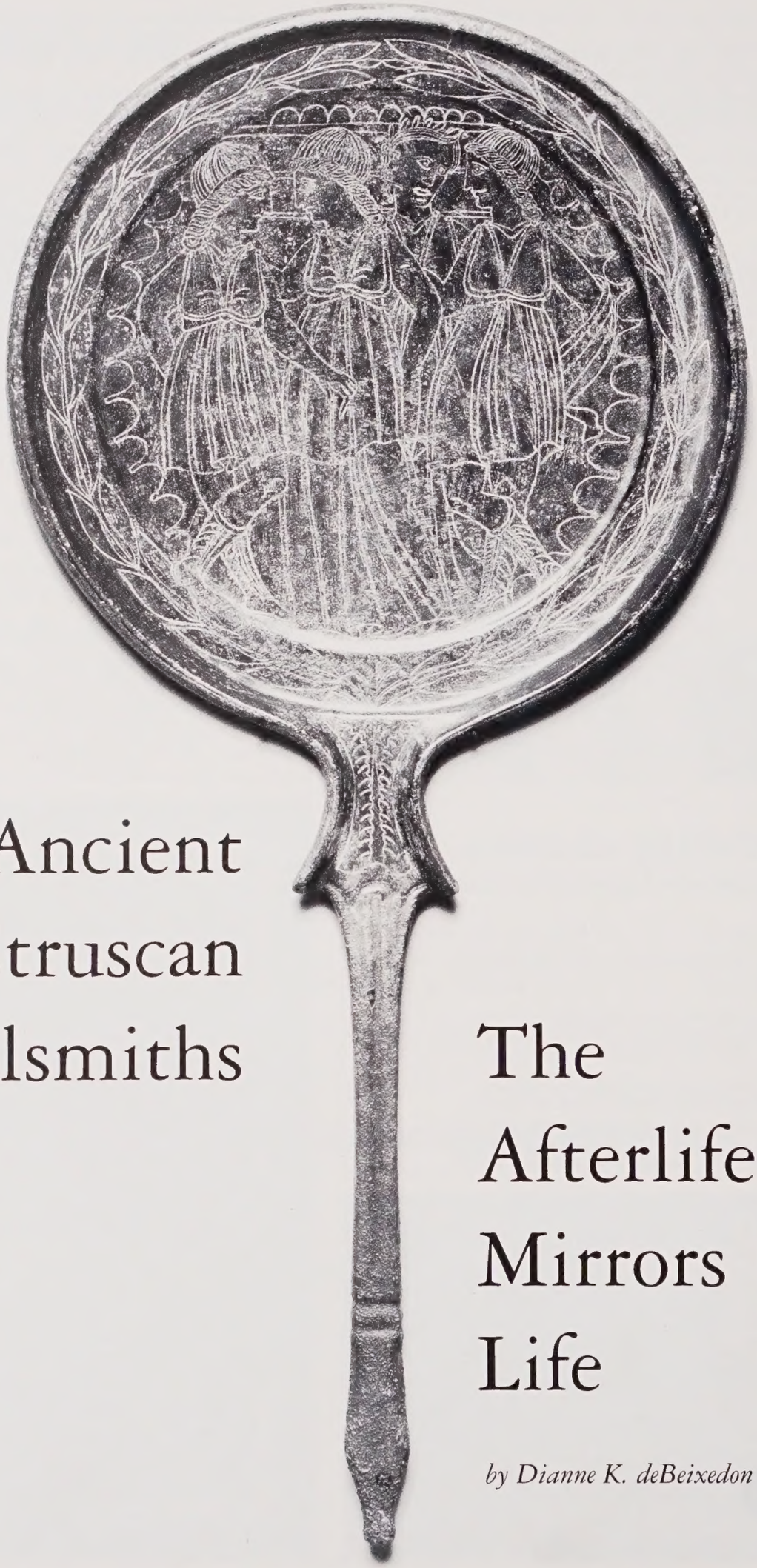

Ancient Etruscan Metalsmiths

The Afterlife Mirrors Life

by Dianne K. deBeixedon

Etruscan Bronze Mirror, 3rd century B.C.
The back of this mirror is incised with two Dioscuri and two women, encircled by a wreath of leaves, 10⅝" long. Collection: Merstens-Schaffhausen. Photo: Courtesy The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD

Looking down the long corridors of time, the ancient Etruscans emerge as a powerful people whose economic and social development was founded on their metal industry. Over the centuries, however, the Etruscans were gradually absorbed into the Roman Empire and their language disappeared.

Because written records are missing or irretrievably lost, Etruscan history is shrouded in speculation and legend, and only recently discoveries in Italy have shed light on Etruscan culture. Etruria, Italy's first great civilization, rose and flowered from 750 to 100 B.C., reaching the peak of its power from 600 to 500 B.C. Roughly, the boundaries of Etruria were the Arno river to the North; the Tiber river to the east and south; and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west (corresponding to modern Tuscany). With their military prowess, the Etruscans spread outward from central Italy. By 600 B.C., they dominated the western shore from Pisa to Rome and crossed the Tiber River, controlling much of the present province of Campania. As they moved further south near Naples, they met resistance from the residents of the Greek colony Cumae and were pushed back. They continued their northward thrust crossing the Apennines ridge, colonizing the fertile Po Valley. Their movement north was thwarted only due to pugnacious Venetian tribes.

Etruscan civilization appeared, almost suddenly (in comparison to the slow pace of ancient history). The land they controlled offered plentiful game as a summer and winter pasture for migrating flocks. And as they cleared forests and drained flood lands and marshes, the fertility of their land became second to none, producing some of the highest crop yields in antiquity. But it was metallurgical wealth that determined Etruria's development, urbanization and rapid rise to prosperity.

As sailors, warriors and merchants, the Etruscans traded with Greece and its colonies in Sicily and Ionia, Northern Africa, Cypress and Spain. The Romans called them Tusci or Etrusci, and the Greeks called them Tyrrhenol, a name that survives today for the Tyrrhenian Sea on the western coast of Italy. Lost in time, the names for their prosperous cities are now known by their Roman names (Tarquinii, Caere, Vulci, Veii and Clusium) or modern Italian names (Arezzo, Cortona, Orvieto, Fiesole and Voltera).

Although the Etruscans were fearsome warriors and seafarers, their expansion and power rested on their material and industrial wealth. They mined and processed copper, lead, iron and finished metal products for export. Cities such as Populonia were known for their iron industry, Tarquinii for the production of bronze utensils. The source of economic strength lay in their control of the mineral resources from the Tolfa Hills (west of Lake Bracciano), northward to the Cottins Metallifere (the metal-bearing mountain chain) of Tuscany, where ore deposits of copper, lead, iron and tin were abundant.

The cities that became wealthy from the production of bronze produced some of the finest metalsmiths on the Italian peninsula, who created bronze weapons, candelabra, household utensils, figurines and cauldrons. Iron, however, eclipsed bronze as a bountiful resource. A seemingly inexhaustible supply of ore came primarily from the Island of Elba, off the western coast of Italy. Ancient writers describe the multitude of furnaces that spewed clouds of heavy smoke into the Mediterranean heavens. Experts estimate from the remaining slag heaps on Elba and the coast that the Etruscans extracted and worked from 10,000 to 12,000 tons of iron ore every year for 400 years! In the Etruscan port of Populonia, there are traces of more than 500 mining shafts, together with smelting furnaces, some dating back to 750 B.C.

When the wood used for furnace fuel was gradually depleted, the Etruscans transported the raw ore on barges across the six-mile strait to the city of Populonia. There it could be treated with more efficient furnaces and formed into moderate-sized blocks for export. These blocks, which looked like black sponges, were purchased and transported by merchants, in exchange for money, goods or gold.

Knowledge of the Etruscans' vast wealth, material goods and lifestyle is elusive, but, fortunately, they placed their accumulated wealth of jewelry, household goods and weapons into their tombs for use in Eternity. Most of what we know about the civilization has been learned from such paintings and objects. The acres of cemeteries around Italy's modern cities have helped us reconstruct what the Etruscans were like in life. They were not only a culture of warriors, traders and builders, but an exuberant, sensual people with a passion for the good life.

Residences for the dead have survived much more frequently then those of the living, and many tombs, constructed to last for centuries, have remained intact and undisturbed. Believing that the dead wanted the same comforts as the living, the Etruscans placed objects of earthly life in the tombs. Thus, the contents of the tombs provide a relatively accurate portrayal of Etruscan life. The earliest tombs were covered mounds of earth, and, over a period of 200 years, the structures evolved into short, squat houses where the dead were placed in urns or sarcophagi.

Left
Bronze Etruscan Lamp, 4th century B.C.
Designed to be suspended from the ceiling the elaborate decoration appears on the underside of the lamp, 24" in diameter. Collection: Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca, Cortona, Italy.
Photo: Courtesy Soprintendenza Alle Anitchita d'Etruria, Firenze

Below left
Bronze Etruscan Lamp, 4th century B.C.
Collection: Mueso dell'Accameia Etrusca, Cortona, Italy.
Photo: Courtesy Frances Van Keuren

The Etruscans believed that one's spirit was in danger of a horrible transformation after death, unless a place for the bodily remains was provided. To insure that the spirit retained a human form as it passed beyond the grave, potters and metalsmiths were commissioned to produce anthropomorphic urns. The urns vary in form and size but most are decorated with human characteristics, some simple and abstract and others realistic and elaborate.

Gold jewelry, silver, chariots, votive figures and elegant household furnishings filled the tombs of the Etruscan dead. Metal objects made of bronze had a sacred character and ritualistic purpose. The chariots and wagons, for example, used for parades and funerals, were covered with open or pierced ornaments of bronze and iron. They may also have been decorated with figurative panels or decorative motifs formed by repoussé.

Countless small bronze votive figures used for religious dedication also were placed in the tombs. These votive figures represent the worshipper, noble lady, warrior and robed male figure. They were cast with a base or long tangs under the feet so they could be fixed with lead into a wooden or soft sandstone base. The surfaces of the bronzes were carefully polished and finished with delicately incised detail.

The figures themselves have a uniquely Etruscan appearance. Not having the Greek passion for anatomy or classical proportion, the Etruscans made figures with narrow flattened bodies and only a slight suggestion of breasts and buttocks. By exaggerating the facial features, hands and feet, the artist could project expression and personality. While the style of the bronze figures varied from region to region, most, even if in an active pose, retain the long tubular torso, thin, graceful arms and stylized elegance.

Another important type of bronze object found in the burial sites is the incense burner. The most prevalent design resembles a table candelabra with a three-legged base of human figures supporting a central shaft. The decorative dancing and mythological figures symbolize the joys and festivities of life. Many incense burners have repeated motifs, such as lions or plant forms, that were made in molds and then chased and incised with details.

Also used in Etruscan homes were candelabra and oil lamps, the latter a Greek influence. Some floor candelabra are tall, standing almost four-feet high, with a three-legged base supporting a vertical shaft that terminates in horizontal prongs to pierce the candles and hold them upright. Again, cast or chased joyful dancing figures, lions or plant forms usually decorated the central shaft. Burning an oil lamp required constant adjustment of the thick fiber wick through the lamp nozzles. Oil lamps ranged from simple, with one wick, to elaborate, such as the cast bronze Cortona lamp with 16 nozzles. Since the Cortona lamp was designed to hang suspended from the ceiling, the elaborate decoration appears on the underside.

The importance of adornment to the Etruscans is reflected in the sheer quantity and quality of jewelry found in the tombs. Earrings, following the Greek fashion, were large and light. Many of these thin gold earrings were shaped like disks, grape clusters, or barrels decorated with delicate loops and spirals of filigree. Both Etruscan men and women wore pendants, called *bullae*, designed to hold an amulet. The hollow, lenticular *bullae* were hung on necklaces or bracelets worn on the upper arm.

As far back as 700 B.C., the gold jewelry found in the tombs was made with a high degree of skill and expertise. Where did this technical virtuosity come from so suddenly? It is difficult to believe that such complex gold jewelry was produced when few, if any, Etruscan gold mines existed. One possible explanation might be that in trading with the Greeks and Phoenicians, gold work passed into Etruria directly or indirectly in exchange for Etruscan iron. In all likelihood, the refined gold jewelry that appears in the Etruscan tombs was designed by Greek or Phoenician craftsman to satisfy the Etruscan market and artistic taste.

Of all the individual objects found in the Etruscan tombs, the bronze hand mirrors may tell us the most about the culture. The mirrors were engraved with illustrations of Greek myths or scenes of daily life. The engraved characters were labeled with names or identified by costume and symbolic attributes, giving scholars one of the first clues to the Etruscan language and lifestyle.

For Etruscan women, elegance and adornment were symbols of their social status. Unable to acquire such status through political office, the priesthood or war, women considered the material objects they were buried with to be their "insignia" as they traveled into the afterlife. Just as men were buried with the symbols of their authority and achievements (weapons, magistrate's chairs, etc.) to retain their importance in the afterlife, so, too, a noble woman would want her "insignia" or objects that represented her prestige.

The mirrors, therefore, were cherished possessions and were custom-made or given as gifts. They were not intended for export or trade, but specifically made for an individual in life and buried with her in death. The mirrors were round, flat disks with a hand grip. The front of the mirror

A Metalsmith's Guide to Etruscan Art in Tuscany

This list offers a brief guide.
The hours of the museums are subject to change;
check before you arrive.

Arezzo

Archaeological Museum (Museo Archaeologico). Open 9 AM – 2 PM (1 PM Sundays and holidays), closed Mondays. Outstanding collection of Etruscan votive bronze figures.

Cortona

Praetorian Palace (Palazzo Pretorio). Open 10 AM – 1 PM and 4 – 6 PM. The central hall contains Etruscan bronze votive figures and implements. The museum also has an impressive 5C B.C. cast bronze oil lamp surrounded by 16 figures supporting the oil nozzles.

Florence

Archaeological Museum (Museo Archeologico). Open 9 AM – 2 PM (1 PM Sundays and holidays), closed Mondays. Excellent collection of bronze votive figures, stone urns, iron work, bronze implements and fibulae. In this collection also is the famous bronze sculpture of the Chimera, the beast lion, crouching in an attacking position.

Orvieto

Museo del Popolo Orvietano. Open 9 AM – 1 PM and 3 PM – 5:30 PM. This museum holds the collection of the Count Faina Family. It contains Etruscan funeral monuments, terracottas, bronzes, jewelry and cosmetic implements. Of special interest is a wheeled bronze brazier dating 6C B.C. and a bronze basket made of twisted wire.

Perugia

National Archaeological Museum of Umbria (Museo Nazionale Archeologico dell'Umbria). Open 9 AM – 1:30 PM (9 AM – 1 PM Sundays and holidays), closed Mondays. Excellent collection of bronze work, especially bronze fibulae.

Rome

Vatican Museums. Open 9 AM – 2 PM. In July, August and September, 9 AM – 5 PM, also during Holy and Easter weeks. Etruscan Museum (Museo Gregoriano Etrusco). This collection is of special interest because it contains objects from the Regolini-Galassi Tomb. In the collection are bronze helmets, candelabra, pitchers, urns and gold objects that are spectacular. Especially beautiful is the gold fibula and the raised and embossed bronze cauldron with griffins projecting over the rim.

Museo Nazionale De Villa Guilia. This exquisite collection contains metalwork from southern Etruria (Vulci, Cerveteri, Palestrina, Tarquinia and Veii).

Volterra

Etruscan Museum (Museo Etrusco Guarnacci). Open April to September, 9 AM – 1 PM and 2:30 PM – 5:30 PM, closed Mondays. Enormous collection of funeral urns.

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was finished to a high, reflective polish, while the back was elaborately engraved. Figures and illustrations of the Greek myths were beautifully drawn with flowing contour line and delicate detail. These distinctive objects made especially to honor women remained an Etruscan specialty from the last quarter of the 6th century B.C. to well into the third century B.C.

In sharp contrast to Greek and Roman women, who lived in the shadow of their homes, Etruscan women had a great deal of freedom and status. They attended dances, concerts, sports events, chariot races and acrobatic displays. They participated with men at banquets where they reclined as did the men, on the couches of the triculinium. Such participation in public and private life appeared indiscreet, and in some ancient writings Etruscan women were described in an unflattering manner. Nevertheless, Etruscan women were held in high regard within their own society, and the strong affection and bond between women and their families is apparent in subject matter chosen for their mirrors.

Even in death women were honored and had a prominent place. One of the most ancient and luxurious of tombs, the Regolini-Galassi tomb at Caere (650 B.C.), was constructed for a princess. The tomb alcoves contained funerary urns of two warriors surrounded by rich furnishings of silver and bronze. The main funerary chamber, however, designed for a woman, was filled with gold, silver and ivory. Beside the throne remained a bejeweled skeleton of a woman.We only know her name by the inscription engraved on the silver cups and goblets – Larthia.

From the thousands of mirrors that have been found, the most popular style has a round or pear-shaped reflecting surface with an attached handle. The earliest examples in museums no longer have the handles intact, but mirrors produced from later times are complete with ivory, bone or wooden handles.

The method used to make the grip hand mirror is not fully understood, although recent microscopic metallurgic examinations and surface analysis have added much information. Most of the mirrors are composed of binary (copper-tin) alloys, using a composition of approximately 86% copper and 13% tin. Trace elements of lead, nickel, iron and antimony can be attributed to natural impurities in the ores.

The mirrors were cast as closely as possible to the desired shape. However, there is dispute over what casting method was used. It is possible that they were cast in stone molds, which were used a number of times before breaking from heat shock. Or they may have been cast by the lost-wax method. For the latter, metalsmiths may have used stone molds to make the preliminary wax model. Whatever method was used, once cast and removed from the mold, the mirror was annealed and hammered to smooth out imperfections and refine the convex surface.

Final cutting, shaping and finishing may have been done on a lathe. Some mirrors have a "cupule," or small indentation, in the center of the disk. This indentation may have been the pivot for the pointed spindle of the lathe. Concentric circles visible on the reverse side also suggest the use of a lathe. However, some experts feel that the depression on the mirrors is too large to have been made by a lathe and was created, instead, by a tool that kept the disk stationary for engraving. Of course the "cupule" might have been a reference point, as in raising, to measure and insure even hammering. After the mirror was shaped and finished, the engraved decoration was applied. The preliminary drawings on the bronze may have been done in crayon and then the lines cut with a triangular or diamond-shaped burin. Last, the convex surface was polished to a reflective shine with emery and tin oxide and the handle was attached.

Today, when you see an Etruscan mirror in a museum, centuries of corrosion and oxidation make it difficult to perceive the detail of the engraving. Often museums display a line drawing of the engraved image. A restored or conserved mirror has been carefully cleaned and the bronze deterioration has been halted by chemical treatments. Incised lines are filled with white drawing ink and the pits filled with tinted microcrystalline wax. The conservation improves the appearance, adds clarity to the detail and protects the mirror, but one must still use imagination to see how striking the mirror must have been when new.

In looking at the wide range of subjects engraved on the Etruscan mirrors, the Etruscan character and vitality become apparent. Many mirrors have written dedications or the owner's name. One such translation from a fourth-century mirror is inscribed "Titus Calus gave this mirror to his mother as a gift." Mirrors might be inscribed with their owners names, much as we do today with monograms and initials on silverware. For example, one mirror reads, "I am the mirror of Larthia Puruhena."

In contrast to the Greek inclination for simplification and idealization, the Etruscans preferred everyday occurrences. The engraver-artist could emphasize the client's wealth by including details of jewelry, luxurious clothes, furniture and accessories. There are a wide variety of scenes showing men and women dressing, adorning themselves, attending banquets or

Left
Etruscan Bronze Mirror, about 300 B.C.
The back of this hand mirror is engraved with a scene of Hermes and Paris, 10½" h. x 5¾" d. Photo: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Hanes

Center
Etruscan Bronze Mirror, 3rd century B.C.
On the back, within a band of leaves is a seated nude youth with a club in his left hand and in the right hand an object. A winged female figure stands to his right, holding a fish(?) toward the youth. The mirror is engraved with a tongue pattern at the edge and a palmette at the top of the handle, with stalks of palmette, a border of dots and an animal head at the tip of the handle, 12"l. x 6 13/16" d. Collection: Warneck. Photo: Courtesy The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD

Right
Etruscan Bronze Mirror, about 300 B.C.
This mirror's back is engraved with the Judgment of Paris, 27.5 cm h. Photo: Ken Strothman and Harvey Osterhoudt. Courtesy: Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, IN

being waited upon by servants. Frequently, the subjects were intimate and private, showing scenes of their personal life. A husband and wife might be shown at banquet or a well-dressed couple might be depicted standing in their bedroom. Romantic and sensual themes include embracing lovers, bathers and dancers. Women often chose literary themes from Greek mythology that reflected the importance of women as nurturers. Scenes with children, births, nursing infants and family "gatherings" are lovingly handled and display the importance of the family unit.

The majority of the Etruscan mirrors, however, use Greek mythological stories. The preference for Greek themes above their own mythology is a puzzle. The range in subjects show that the Etruscans possessed a sophisticated knowledge of literary and artistic Greek tradition. The choice of Greek themes simply may have been the belief that the Greek culture was the best the world had to offer. However, one must not dismiss the Etruscan culture as a mere variant of Greek civilization. For all their "borrowing" and purchasing of Greek culture, the Etruscans maintained a strikingly independent approach in their art, achieving something unique. Uninterested in classical principles, they emphasized capturing the instant or spirit of the moment rather than any permanent, philosophical truth.

Etruscan metalwork is characterized by an energy and intensity. Their economy, based on metal industry and trade, extended their influence throughout the ancient world. And although the record of their artistic and technical achievements does not exist in ancient books, the history of Etruscan metalsmithing has been left to us in the objects themselves.

Note: *I would like to offer my appreciation to the University of Georgia, Studies Abroad Program and to Gary Noffke for help and support. As a result of my travels in Italy with the Cortona Program, a brief guide to Etruscan metalwork collections appears with this article.*

Dianne deBeixedon is Associate Professor of Art at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, where she teaches metalsmithing and jewelry.

Reading

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Simon Sparrow, Untitled, *plastic, metal, wood and ceramic beads, shells, watch, chain, jewelry, ceramic flowers and tile, glitter and glue on wood, 44 x 32 x 3", 1988. Photo: Mike Mau. Courtesy: Carl Hammer Gallery, Illinois and JMKAC*

Simon Sparrow's imagery is flat, frontal and hierarchal; i.e., the images are positioned within the frame based on meaning and significance. These characteristics recall much of the religious art from the Middle Ages and particularly Renaissance icons that were used in religious ceremony.

Structure and Surface

Beads in Contemporary American Art

by Mark Richard Leach

Throughout history, beads have been treated as valuable personal possessions. More than thirty-thousand years ago, Cro-Magnon man strung pierced bear and lion teeth into necklaces that were worn both as adornment and as an indication of social standing. Beads have been used for the embellishment of different types of ceremonial garments, such as anklets, headbands and headdresses. In many cultures, beads were symbolic of commonly held beliefs and ritual practices. Numerous African tribes held beads in high esteem for their medicinal powers. In the Philippines, two beads placed in a cup symbolically represented the binding of man and woman in marriage, and in the Catholic religion, beads prompt a sequence of prayer worship. Beads were also used to barter for goods and as currency. As the writer Lois Sherr Dubin explains, "From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Europeans exchanged glass beads for beaver pelts in North America, for spices in Indonesia, and for gold, ivory, and slaves in Africa."[1] Although beads have lost many of their earlier associations and connotations, in Western culture they are, nevertheless, still familiar, even fashionable objects.

Beads, the primary material out of which the objects in *Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art* have been created, have not traditionally been considered a fine art material, despite their long history of use as decoration and adornment. However, many contemporary artists, particularly during this decade, have turned to beads to challenge esthetic boundaries. The reasons are diverse, yet the single most compelling motive for the

Joyce Scott, Night In The City, *glass, plastic and metal beads, cut-out metal figures, felt, cotton thread, photographs and aluminum wire, 15½ x 12 x 2", 1987 – 88. Photo: Mike Mau. Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Illinois, and JMKAC*

In Night in the City *Joyce Scott evokes the tension of urban life by collaging the photograph of a dark alley into the neckpiece. The artist also explores the issue of rape. Multiple unclothed figures are imprisoned in a tangle of webbing, and a white female torso is covered with yellow hand prints, symbolic of violation. The irony of Scott's art is that it is beautiful, thereby fulfilling its function as adornment, yet its content undermines our expectation for the object to perform a singular task – decoration.*

use of nontraditional materials like beads seems to be the possibilities artists find that enable them to transcend traditional approaches to making art. Furthermore, especially in this age of the cheap, mass-produced simulation, the use of beads contests the conceptual boundaries that separate fine art and popular culture.

Among the innovative works included in *Structure and Surface* are the diminutive ritual fetish figures of Mimi Holmes and the opulent and tactile vessel forms of John Garrett. Joyce Scott sews brightly colored beads, newspaper clippings and photographs together to create bold, colorful neckpieces that explore contemporary street life, black music and feminist issues. Larry Fuente restores derelict cars and creates ornate decorative patterns on their surfaces by covering them with a spectacular range of beads, bangles, plastic flowers and found objects. Sherry Markovitz creates life-sized animals such as elk and deer out of papier mâché and covers them with a heavily encrusted surface of intensely colored beads, buttons, fabric scraps and shells. Arch Connelly creates dazzling sculptures by using faux pearls and jewels to cover forms such as an airplane, the prow of a boat, even leaf shapes. This range of works demonstrates that beads are indeed a potent and versatile material.

Several important historical precedents underlie contemporary artists' use of beads. The early twentieth-century development of collage, initially practiced by Cubists Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso and others, was a process whereby nonart materials were introduced into the art matrix. Most of the artists represented in the exhibition (Sherry Markovitz, Buster Cleveland, Robert Ebendorf and Joyce Scott, for example) use collage or variations of the process in many of their works.

The artists whose work is included in *Structure and Surface* also share formal and conceptual affinities with artists of the American Pop Art movement. The critical examination of American culture carried out by Pop artists like Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol included a study of the material excess of American culture in the 50s and 60s. Robert Rauschenberg's "combine paintings" of the mid- to late 1950s are particularly important for their suggestion of accumulation. They rescue quilted blankets, newsprint, signs, postcards and the like from their ordinary uses in daily life and preserve them in ways that parody the popular materialistic psyche of the times. By finding new uses for worn, discarded and expended materials, the "combine paintings" of Robert Rauschenberg and his contemporaries opened the door for many of the artists in *Structure and Surface* (Fuente, Cleveland, Ebendorf, Rhonda Zwillinger, Markovitz, Connelly and Harper, for example) because of the way these works attempted to "act in the gap between art and life."

In our technologically based society, many persons are attracted to objects that are tactile, sensuous and invite associations with everyday experience. The re-evaluation in the late 1960s of the esthetic merit of traditional crafts, such as woodworking, basket making, weaving and quilting as well as the work of folk and outsider artists, is an important result of this natural human predilection. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that mainstream artists are integrating both formal and stylistic attributes of traditional forms into their work. This direction may be seen as an attempt on the part of artists to reinvigorate the art object with ideas that reflect a broader social purpose.

Feminist art, which coalesced in the years around 1970 at

Suzanne Rezac, Necklace, *18k gold, constructed, ⅝ x 18 x ⅝", 1987*
Courtesy Rezac Gallery, Chicago

Suzanne Rezac's interest in surface and form is demonstrated by her imaginative and skillful treatment of precious metals like gold and silver. Her sculptural vocabulary in metals consists of geometric forms – circles, spheres, lozenges or squares – and the properties that the metals possess – purity, surface, grain, lustre, weight, smoothness and temperature. Rezac may manipulate the purity of gold in a bead in the same way a painter would use the intensity or value of color to delineate shape and form. This concept can be enhanced by using the warmth of gold in contrast with the coolness of silver or other metals. Ironically, by keying on the simple, intrinsic properties of her materials, Rezac finds infinite creative possibilities.

the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia through the joint efforts of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, is particularly significant to a contemporary bead esthetic. In the early 1970s, Schapiro began using traditional craft materials and techniques, such as gluing or sewing geometric pieces of fabric to canvas in order to create her art. This practice, termed by Schapiro "femmage," played off the idea of "collage," because for centuries women had been practicing similar methods through traditional domestic crafts; for example, hooking, piecing, sewing and quilting. By using such traditional methods, femmage opened the door for artists like those represented in *Structure and Surface* to explore the expressive range of domestic materials.

The feminist art movement created new areas of artistic investigation for all artists. Because of the breakthrough in the 1970s, much attention was focused on the creative possibilities of fabric. Artists were attracted to its flatness, decorative pattern and sensuous surface. The resulting investigations gave impetus to a movement, primarily in painting, called "pattern and decoration." Among those individuals who pioneered the pattern crusade were Miriam Schapiro, Lucas Samaras, Kim MacConnel, Sam Gilliam, Alan Shields and Joyce Kozloff. This outgrowth of interest in the creative potential of pattern and the fusion of traditional feminist art practices is still a source of vital interest to many of the artists whose work is included in *Structure and Surface.*

Finally, the mechanical procedures that are associated with using beads, such as repetition and seriality, coupled with the idea that beads function as a unit or module, recalls both Minimal and Process art of the late 60s and 70s. Nearly two-thirds of the artists represented in *Structure and Surface* (John Garrett, Rhonda Zwillinger, William Harper, Joyce Scott, Sherry Markovitz, Robert Ebendorf, Larry Fuente and Mimi Holmes) explore the abstract and decorative possibilities that the use of pattern and seriality provide.

Artists of New York City's East Village neighborhood, who became active in the early 1980s, look to the culture of their immediate environment for inspiration. This sensibility parallels that of the Pop Art period, with one critical distinction. East Village artists trivialize and parody the sophisticated ideals of the avant-garde by undercutting the hermetic purity of the high modernist esthetic through an assimilation of elements of kitsch into their work. In contrast to the heroic scale and abstract formalism of much contemporary painting, works in *Structure and Surface* by Rhonda Zwillinger, Arch Connelly and Buster Cleveland are often figurative and/or small in scale. In addition, they incorporate an eclectic menu of pictorial modes – from Pop Art, graffiti and mass-media imagery to the self-conscious reconstruction of Neo-Expressionism, Surrealism and 1970s "bad" art. Their work is, as one critic describes it, "blatantly eclectic, cannibalistic, frequently quoting its sources directly, either in irony, nostalgia, fantasy or futility."[2]

Because beads are such a ubiquitous and often devalued material, we frequently think of them as simply embellishment. Beads are used to create jewelry and to decorate handcrafted objects such as pillows, quilts or garments; therefore, they are seldom seen as carriers of intellectual content or esthetic value. However, the artists represented in this exhibition demonstrate that beads can be used to create sophisticated, provocative artworks. In addition, *Structure and Surface* is also an examination of

the many formal adaptations of the material. For example, the multitude of colors available in beads allows for the creation of painterly effects. Further, the optical effects that beads possess, including reflectivity, luminosity and opacity, are visual qualities similar to and at times even surpassing the visual qualities found in painting. This visual richness is evident in the work of Fuente, Connelly, Zwillinger, Markovitz and Cleveland. Because beads are three-dimensional, they can also be a sculptural medium. Some of the artists use this attribute to investigate three-dimensional forms of expression. In Joyce Scott's work, for example, thousands of beads are joined together to create individual figures that are then combined to complete a rich figurative tableau in the form of a neckpiece. The fabrication of individual beads becomes an opportunity for Suzan Rezac to explore the sculptural possibilities of abstract geometric form.

Artists Robert Ebendorf, Suzan Rezac and William Harper make their own beads from both precious and nonprecious materials. The impetus for creating beads ultimately can be linked to their past and current use as adornment. However, as the art historian Oppi Untracht explains, "Central to the Western cultural concept of jewelry as art is the idea that the work is the designer's product of self-expression, and therefore creative and unique."[3] Even though the individual beads are extraordinary in and of themselves, they are combined to form wearable art. These artists use collage, assemblage and fabrication, processes traditionally associated with the fine art practices of painting and sculpture. Often these approaches are used in conjunction with metalwork techniques such as cloisonne enameling, lamination and florentine surface finishing.

Most of the artists represented in *Structure and Surface* utilize commercially made beads just as other artists would use paint, bronze or wood. However, the choice of beads as a primary artistic material necessitates working methods different from those traditionally used to create paintings and sculpture. These artists use several different methods to attach beads to an armature and/or secure them to one another. Some employ individually hand-set beads with various synthetic adhesives like silicon caulk (Zwillinger), polymer-based substances like acrylic paint medium (Connelly), epoxy resins (Fuente) or adhesives such as 527 Bond Cement (Markovitz) or Elmer's Glue (Sparrow). The beads can be individually strung together with string and stitched to an armature (Holmes and Markovitz), or they may be strung and then glued to an armature (Markovitz). Joyce Scott eliminates the need for an internal armature altogether by using various structural stitches like the "peyote stitch," while John Garrett weaves them into materials such as copper wire.

Several artists represented in *Structure and Surface* use beads to create works of art that ostensibly address formal, fine art considerations, such as the beauty of shape, color and surface. Yet, through their incorporation of inexpensive, mass-produced and common elements, these artists challenge traditional distinctions between the materials of fine art and the materials of more popular art. Arch Connelly's *Travel by Sea* and Rhonda Zwillinger's *Paramount* take the "modernist's" interest in decoration and visual effect to a point which some may even consider "tacky" excess. The exaggeration of formal properties and the reference to traditional subjects, such as a voyage or a romantic landscape, juxtaposed with the "kitschy" qualities of dimestore materials, challenge the

Sherry Markovitz, Bow Wow Queen, *glass, plastic and metal beads, faux pearls, shells, bells, foil, jewelry, toy trinkets, fabric, glitter, tassels and glue on metal screening, papier mâché and wood, 40 x 31 x 31", 1987. Photo: Edwardo Calderon. Courtesy of Linda Farris Gallery, Washington and JMKAC*

During the past decade many artists have sought to erase the boundaries between traditional women's crafts and painting and sculpture. Sherry Markovitz uses the detail and handwork so typical of women's crafts to create rich, encrusted surfaces and exciting visual patterns on her sculptures.

artificial and limiting strictures of modernist canons. This confrontation causes the viewer to question the esthetic values and distinctions of our contemporary culture.

Joyce Scott, Sherry Markovitz and Mimi Holmes also address a spectrum of sociocultural concerns related to contemporary street life, nature and the environment. Their work recalls women's domestic handwork, crafts and wearable art forms. References are also made to both the forms and practices of divergent ethnic groups such as the Native American, Afro-American, Muslim and Hindu cultures and to difficult issues such as racism, inequality and death.

Simon Sparrow and Larry Fuente create works that show a preoccupation with the obsession and accumulation of the detritus of popular culture. Beads and other modular objects like buttons, watches, medals, yo-yos, Scrabble tiles and nail-polish bottles replete with nail polish are heaped into dense and, at first glance, casual agglomerations. These creations, less ironic and cynical than the works created by the East Village artists represented in *Structure and Surface*, seem to be direct expressions of an artistic vision that celebrates the glitz and surface of contemporary artifacts. Sparrow and Fuente use these ubiquitous and readily available objects out of their curiosity and affection for popular yet eccentric materials.

Twentieth-century artists increasingly have questioned the rigid complacency that has pervaded the long tradition of academic painting and sculpture. Even though this is so, there are those who argue that using materials and procedural methods that deviate from established practices for making art undermines and diminishes the esthetic merit and cultural significance of the

Rhonda Zwillinger, Sentinel: Shaman, *faux jewels, sequins, and shells set in silicon caulk on metal, metal sword and oil on wood, 64 x 23 x 19", 1988. Collection: Bodi, New York. Photo: Courtesy Gracie Mansion Gallery and JMKAC*

The beads Rhonda Zwillinger uses are brash, even gaudy. They are cheap, common materials; however, Zwillinger uses their color, shape and texture with the confidence of a painter who understands color theory. She hand sets most of the individual and strung beads and jewels in silicon. This process affords her the opportunity to work like a painter, experimenting with different colors, shapes and sizes to achieve the desired surface and optical effects. In pieces like Sentinel: Shaman, *Zwillinger uses the beads and jewels to reinvest furniture and possessions that are no longer inherently valuable or serve a useful purpose with special, even magical, qualities. The stunning color combinations and heavily encrusted, sparkling surfaces animate these possessions. Through this transfiguration, they become meaningful again.*

Joyce Scott, Dressing For Him, *glass, plastic and metal beads, cotton thread and aluminum wire, 13 x 10 x 1", 1985. Photo: Mike Mau. Collection: Sanford M. and Diane Besser, Arkansas. Photo: Courtesy JMKAC*

Joyce Scott's neckpieces incorporate an array of beaded figures whose caricature quality makes it easy to overlook content. For example, Dressing for Him *portrays the stereotypic role of the seductive, Venus-like sex object in which women sometimes find themselves caught.*

object. Although beads, throughout their history, have been used as ornament or for decorative purposes, today's artists use beads as a primary material to create exquisite, conceptually rich wearable art forms, dynamic sculpture and assemblage. The material's varied formal properties – shape, color, transparency, luminosity, reflectivity and physical presence – bear comparison to traditional art materials like paint. The integration of multiple forms of artistic practice in regard to beads – folk art, decorative art, outsider art and feminist art – references many different aspects of our complex culture.

Some theorists contend that "high art" has become unimportant and does not reflect the interest or concerns of contemporary culture. However, *Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art* exemplifies an evolving phenomenon in which artists are investigating the art object's function and social purpose in American culture. It also suggests that "high art" can both reflect and critique the preoccupations of contemporary society. The works produced by the artists in this exhibition manifest a personal, handmade and physical presence. Ironically, all of this is possible at a time when industry and technology continue to separate and sometimes alienate the individual from direct physical experiences. The works in *Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art* provide both a critical and sensuous examination of alternative materials and processes.

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Notes

1. Lois Sherr Dubin, *The History of Beads, from 30,000 B. C. to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1987): 17.
2. Irving Sandler, "Tenth Street Then and Now," *The East Village Scene* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1984): 16-17.
3. Oppi Untracht, *Masterworks of Contemporary American Jewelry: Sources and Concepts* exhibition catalogue (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985): 7.

This article is part of the introduction to the catalog *Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art*, an exhibition developed by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and mounted there from December 4, 1988 to February 12, 1989. For information about the catalog contact JMKAC, 608 New York Avenue, P.O. Box 489, Sheboygan, WI 53082-0489; telephone (414) 458-6144.

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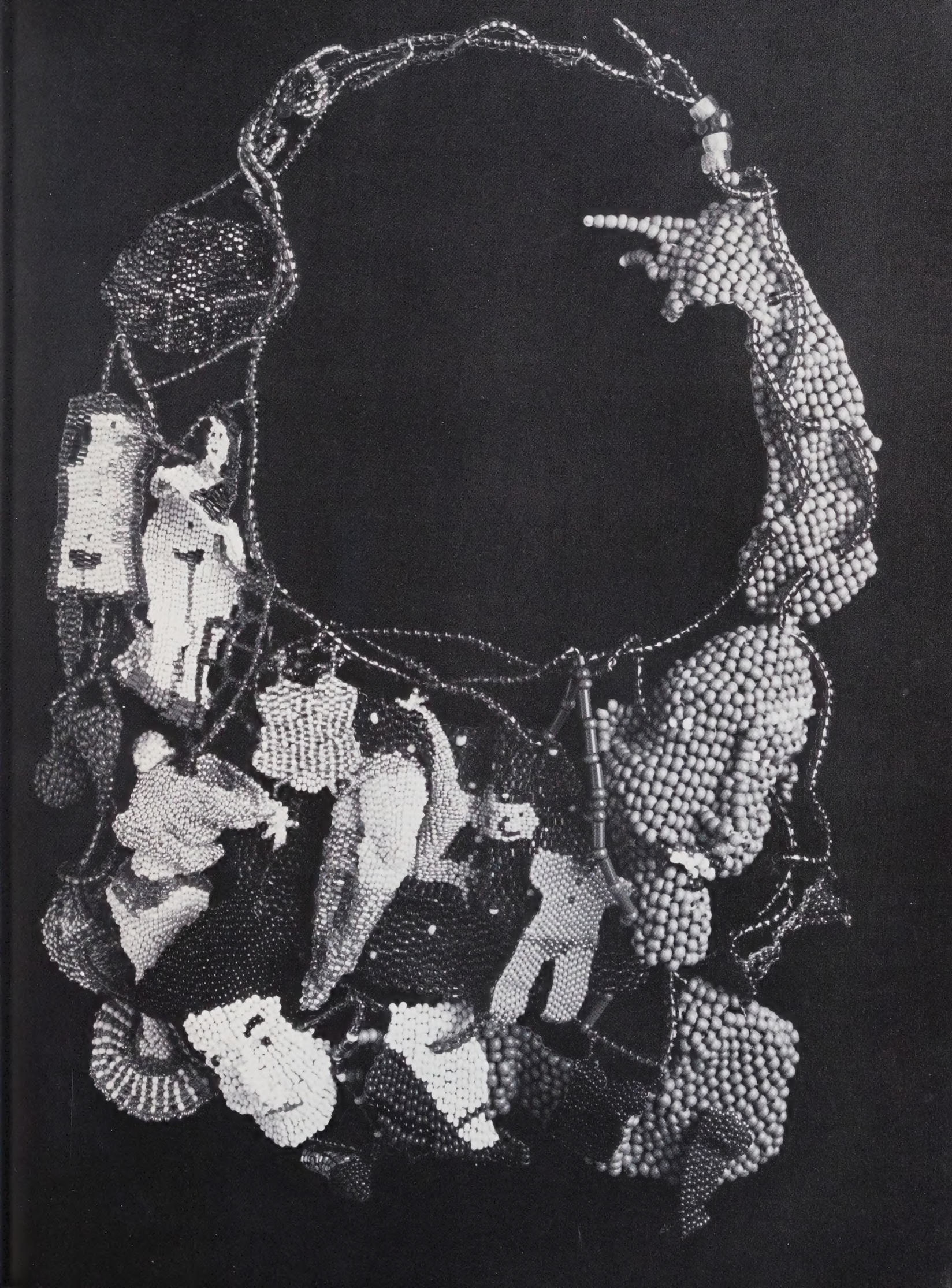


F O

C U S

The focus of Lin Stanionis's work for the last three years has been in exploring the implications inherent in the vessel form when it is employed for symbolic purposes. As a vehicle for this search, she has produced a series of liqueur cups, whose symbolic potential is carried forth in a personally constructed narrative. This work speaks of the luxury of the 1980s as well as the spirituality inherent in medieval objects. For Lin Stanionis, surely "the empty vessel makes the greatest sound."

Lin Stanionis
Chalices for Transubstantiation

Sex, sensuality, the body, the vessel, subconscious desires and delicious libations, ritual and romance. Whenever we feel even a faint connection between our attraction for common, inanimate objects, like corpulent drinking cups, and a suppressed need for carnal pleasure, we attribute the urge, reluctantly, to a state of surreality, a fantasy somewhere beyond what our mind knows to be proper. And then, when we dare to indulge in these playful illusions, we have a sneaking suspicion that we are in the throes of a devious art, a spell that casts confusion over our psychic normality.

Lin Stanionis, a 1981 graduate of that laboratory of holloware Indiana University, has been titillated by the scant difference that separates, say, a satisfying elixir from a ritual intoxicant. Optically, her drinking cups conjure up fantasies, in their mangled incoherence of preposterous images, that suggest vices, dreams, madness, passions, invented customs, sordid bric-a-brac, debauchery — auguries that far exceed a rigid framework of sterile beauty.

It is almost as if she takes the art of drinking to an extreme as an incestuous rite. We drink, first noticing the features of the vessel. Then, bringing it to our lips, the liquid enters our body, to be felt haptically, that is, to have our inner system respond to something in some way that we don't fully comprehend. Only later do its aftereffects return to influence taste and, consequently, our appreciation of the cup and the ambience of the entire ritual. The body is central to experience; it is subject and object of experience. All else is stimuli.

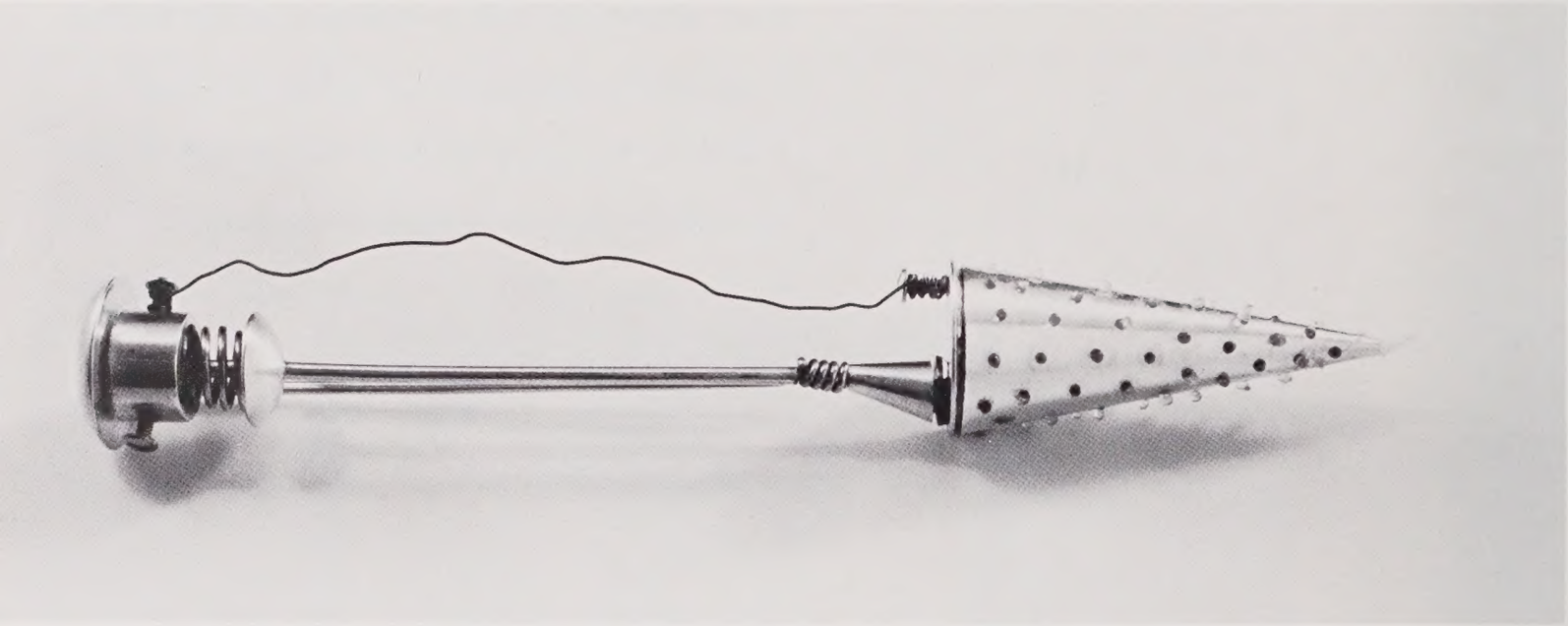
The body as host — in Stanionis's *China Closet*, she pays homage to Duchamp, someone who also used representations of

China Closet
mixed media box with two sterling silver liqueur cups, 4 x 9 x 11"

This work recognizes historical precedents in the reliquaries and religious icons of the Middle Ages, specifically, the Stavelot Triptych and the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. These shrines embody, for me, the potential power of objects used to impart the spirituality and symbology inherent in ritual and commemoration. Just as these and other medieval objects exalted ideals through the enshrinement of objects, so too did they seek to instruct via visual narrative. {Lin Stanionis}

Tickler pin
sterling silver, silicone, copper, steel, 5 x 1½ x ½

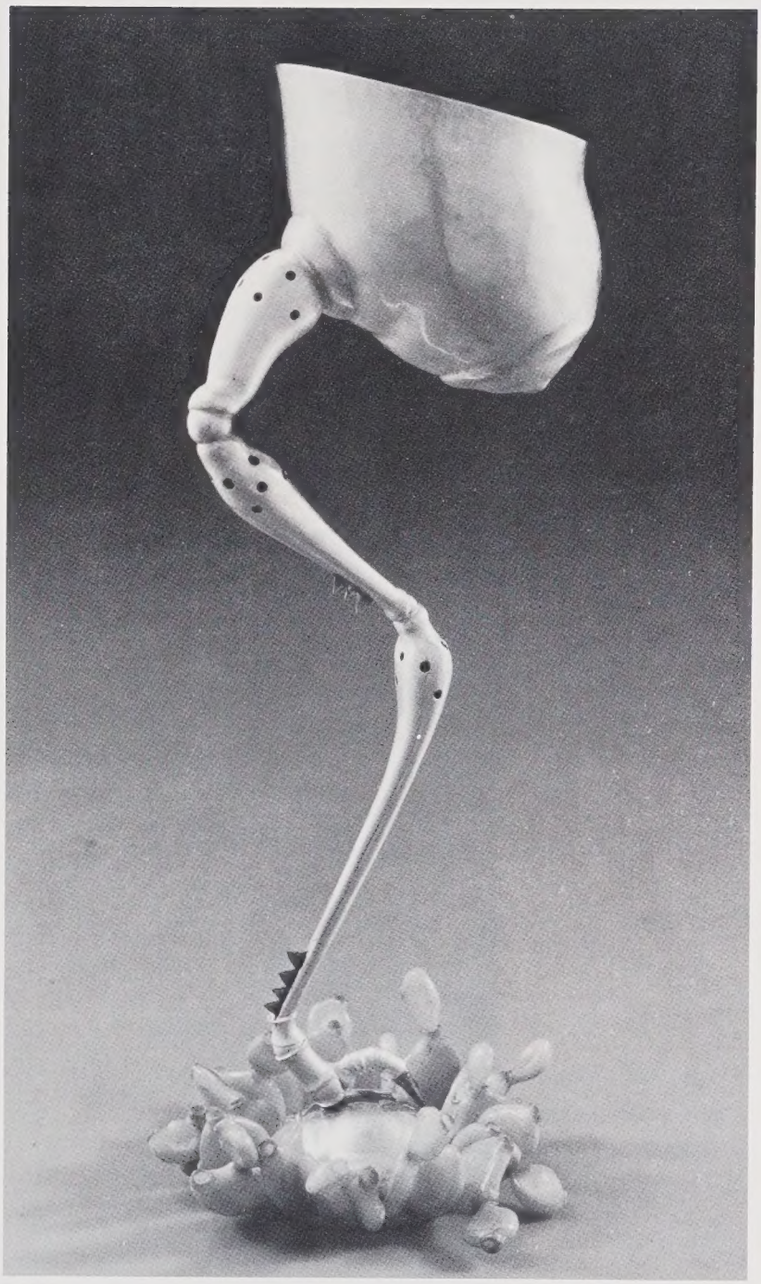
This series of pieces is intended to be playful and elegant, wearable and useful. Their conceptual development is a response to form, function, materials and experimentation. Often, the content of these pieces manifests itself in playful sexuality. (Lin Stanionis)

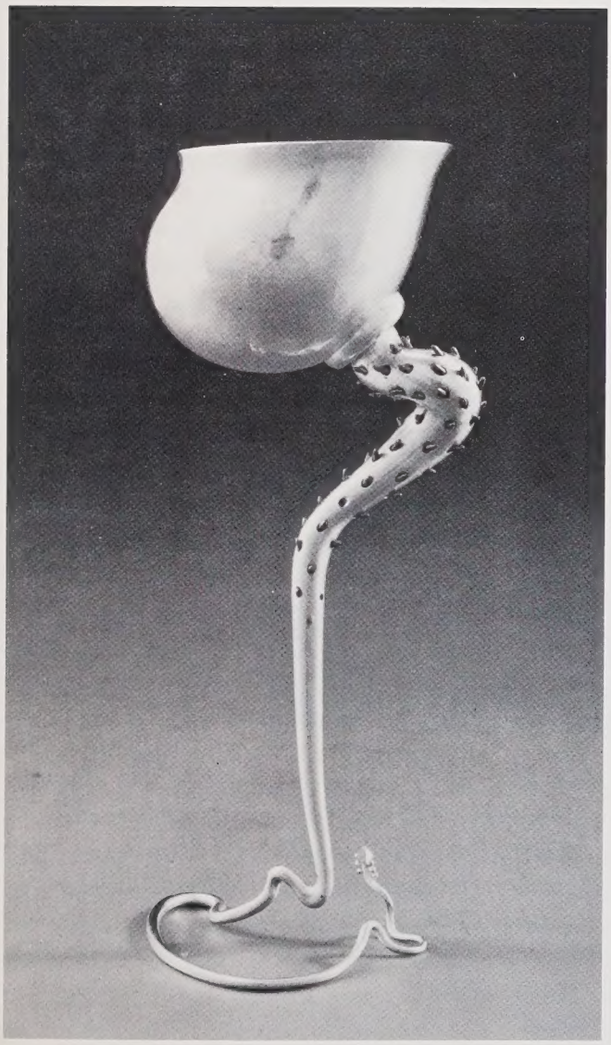


the body to inflict psychic scars, with its rubbery breasts, chessboard inlay and reverence to some unknown Adonis. It is Duchamp's breast book cover, isn't it, or is it a jewel box or a reliquary (both goldsmithing icons of a different type), where a saint's private parts, disinterred relics, are preserved for their spiritual powers.

But, lo and behold, in Stanionis's box, there is a set of liqueur cups, his and hers, vessels of power, chalices for transubstantiation, changing bread and wine into body and blood. The bowls are like little bellies, full little bellies, that sag contentedly. Their stems, however, are more dessicated than would be expected beneath those cherubic paunches that carry the aphrodisiac. Such chicken or frog legs would be a more appropriate pedestal for something you masticate rather than for something you might savour as a reprise to an elegant meal or a suave cocktail to commence a night of expectation. A bony joint grimly serves as a knob for gripping the stem, a macabre line that peters out like a limp vein, an amphibious tail or sometimes a puddle of unmentionable secretion. A ghastly attack on fragile sensibilities would have no better utensil — if you were ready for this kind of seduction, you would probably be expecting the Marquis de Sade.

Speaking about tenses, sadistic or otherwise, Stanionis takes the attack on the body one step further with her *Tickler* pins. Here is a trenchant screw, shiny, metallic, electrified, with a goose-bumped concial point like a high-tech vibrator. Is it wearable? I don't know, but it does cry out for the body, pleads for someone to use it in a ritual, to fulfill its destiny, somewhere deep within secret thoughts...unspeakable practices, unnatural acts. Have you every tickled a dead man?
— SB



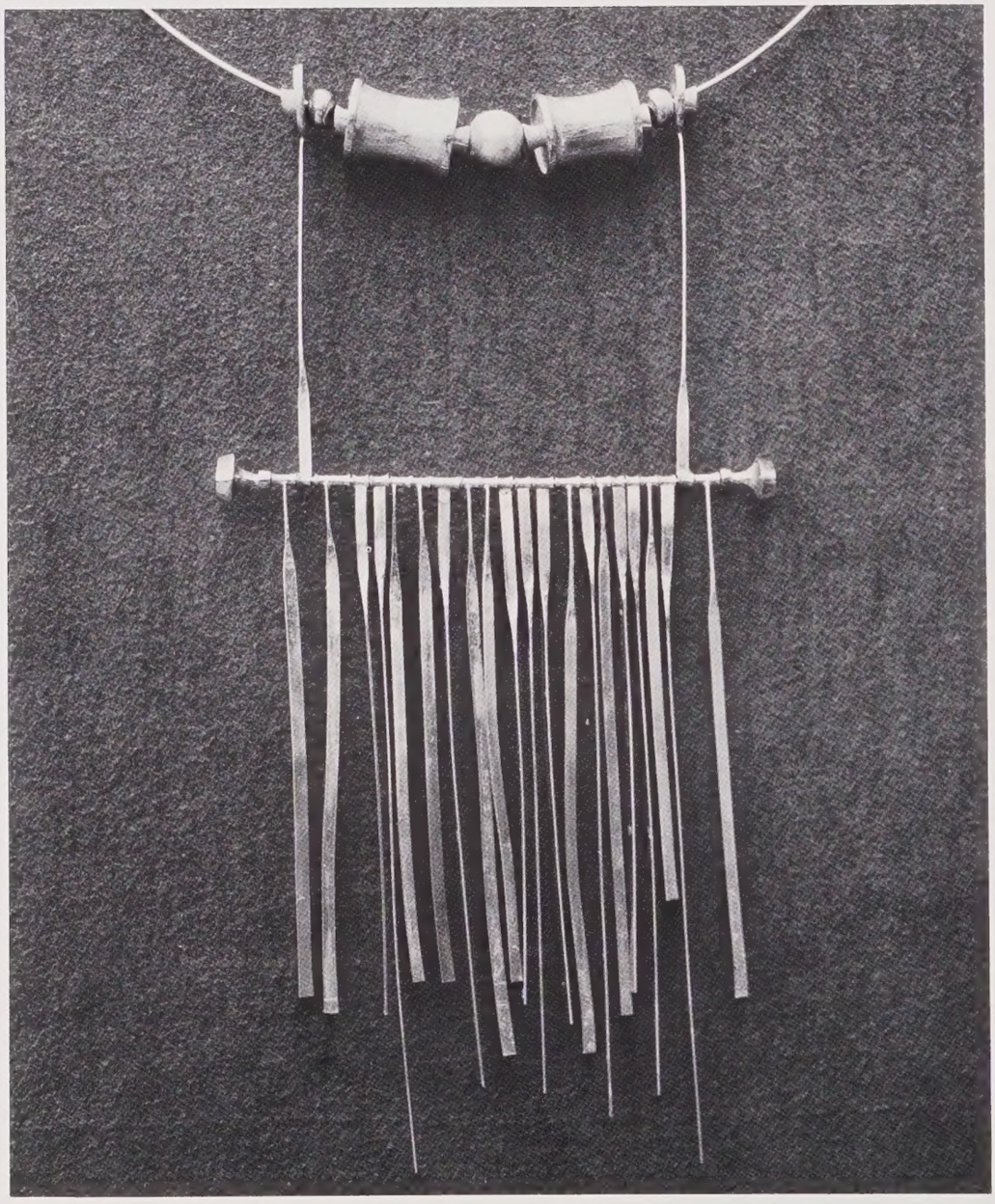


Left
Liqueur Cup #3
sterling silver, niobium, vermeil, raised, cast, constructed, 6 x 2 x 2", 1987

Above right
Liqueur Cup #5
sterling silver, acrylic, niobium, vermeil, laquers, raised, cast, carved, constructed, 6 1/2 x 2 x 2", 1988

The emphasis in this work is to produce vessels that have interpretive intent concerning individuals and events. That is, these vessels carry a consciously constructed, visually implied narrative, the content of which stems from direct experience and references both myth and place. {Lin Stanionis}

Bench



Neckpiece, *14k gold, pearl, forged and fabricated. This neckpiece with its "windchime" flexibility is similar to the one shown in the 1971 exhibition and catalog "California Design Eleven"*

m a r k

Al Pine has been a fixture at Cal State Long Beach for over 25 years, where he teaches with Dieter Muller–Stach. Such a long tenure has hardly dampened his enthusiasm for learning and experiencing his field, as well as teaching what he calls "survival skills," which involves not only imparting technical knowledge but also the impetus to use this knowledge in creative and imaginative ways. His teaching philosophy also encompasses the passing on of an appreciation of crafts related to historical and contemporary technologies and the esthetics of their times in different cultures and countries. Pine's own search for new experiences through travel have taken him on sabbaticals all over the world. An excerpt from a letter home during his trip to Indonesia is just a sample: "I've just come back form a two–day motorcycle excursion up to some mountian lake, temples and volcanos. Shared the experience with a young Swedish landscape architect whom I met since being in Bali. He was the one who drove the rented motorcycle. I navigated and gave ballast to the vehicle. It was really an exhilerating experience to be out in the most remote countryside, going through beautiful villages and farm lands. The people wave, smile, give directions, sell you coconuts, bananas, batik sarongs, wood carvings, delicious food, a little friendly bargaining — but I always let them win. It's such a bargain already."

Al Pine's Conceptual Exploration

A New York City kid in the mid–1950s, who thought that everything west of the Hudson was camping out, Al Pine has come to personify the crafts movement in California, where he has taught in an extremely successful program at CSULB since 1962. In her foreword to the 1971 "California Design Eleven" exhibition and catalog, Eudorah Moore noted: "The crafts movement in California is one of extraordinary vitality at the present time, and is particularly interesting in that it exists quite separately from historic crafts movements or generally indeed, from crafts movements in other parts of the country. Totally devoid of indigenous folk art roots, it represents, at its highest level, a conceptual and experimental probing of materials. Contrary to the community of the fine arts, this aspect of creative expression in this place and time, is uniquely free of the pressures of the marketplace, and most of the explorations going on are highly personal aesthetically, technically and, in certain cases philosophically motivated. There is a strong shift away from the thinking of the creation of the finite object towards evolving a totality of experience. Works take on a life of their own and become a palpable experience . . . . The development of the craft movement here, both quantitatively and qualitatively in the direction it has taken, has probably stemmed from two sources. One is the sociological development of the State. A strongly individual almost frontier syndrome of doing things oneself along with a broad lack of that preciousness which insulates the vision of fine art as an encapsulated separate experience, has been abetted by an educational system which has included materials exploration coupled with availability of tools and expertise, in art, industrial art and environmental studies departments."

In the "California Design Eleven" exhibit, Al Pine showed a forged gold neckpiece with beads, garnets and pearls that exemplified this California crafts spirit. While gold, it eschewed preciousness, having a flexible, mobile quality, like a wearable wind chime, a sophisticated ethnic, hippielike, freedom nurtured in the 60s that became indigneous in the 70s. How Pine came to personify the California crafts movement is fundamental to why crafts have survived in the modern age and what meaning they have for a technological and electronic society.

Al Pine grew up in upper Manhattan, in Harlem and the Bronx, and as a boy in the post–Depression years was fascinated with making things — model airplanes, wooden scooters from roller skates and other toys for street games. He attended an experimental junior high school in the Bronx, where he took sheet metal workshop, woodworking and printmaking, deciding early on that he wanted to be a wood carver or furnituremaker. On his father's advice that these professions were due to become obsolete, Pine entered City College as an Industrial Arts major in 1951. His interest in making things, however, did not wane, and he remembers vividly his metalworking, jewelry and woodworking shops as highly satisfying. During these years at City College, in fact, Pine made fast friends with two other students, who together would form an important triumverate in the annals of metalsmithing history, Fred Fenster and Bernie Bernstein.

The difference for Pine as an Industrial Arts major, however, was the learning process that he calls "shop conscious." The focus was not on the finite object as much as it was on deriving both technical expertise and understanding of design. Pine ad-

In our society today,
identification and titles are essential
in order to pigeonhole one's area of specialization;
therefore, I am not a
"jeweler," "silversmith," "metalsmith," "designer–craftsman,"
but a
"maker of things."

Al Pine, from a wall plaque
at the exhibition
at Canyon Gallery, Topanga, CA,
1967

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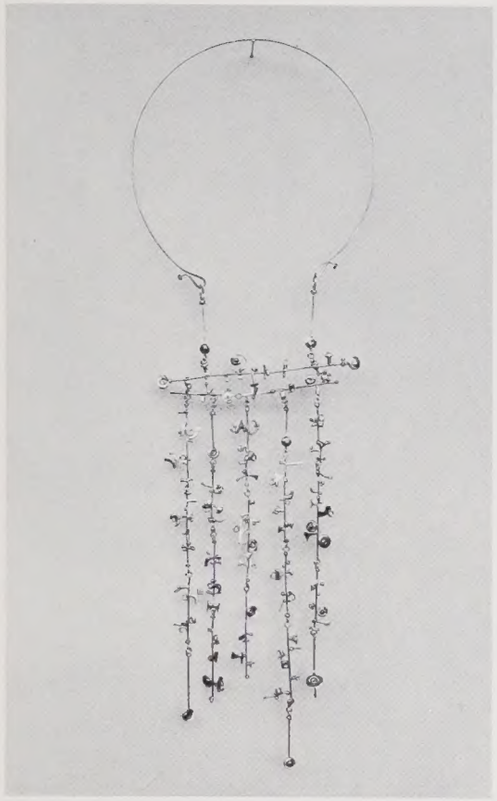
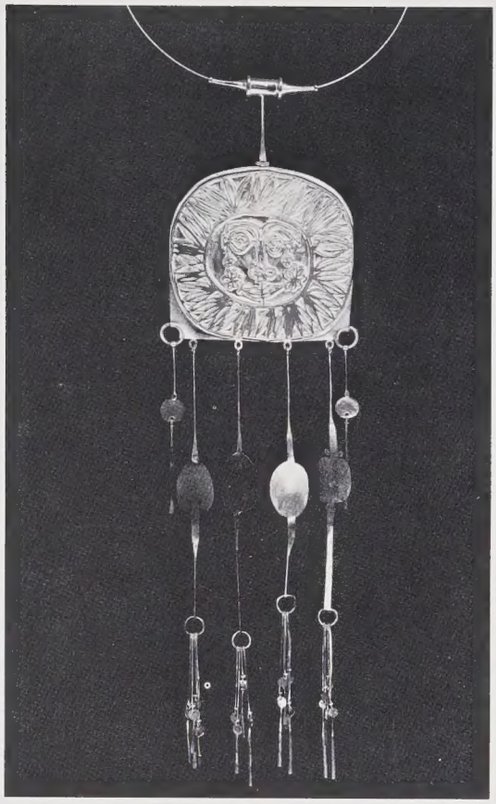
mired greatly, for example, the jewelry being done in Greenwich Village at the time in the studios of Paul Lobel, Ed Wiener and others, and he was perfectly willing, when asked by his sister, to reproduce pieces from Lobel's catalog. For Pine, this was a learning experience. In fact, the Museum of Modern Art's publication *How to Make Modern Jewelry* as well as Kenneth Winebrenner's *Jewelry Making* were well–used demonstration models. The emphasis, then, was not so much on the elusive virtue of originality but on the importance of learning through getting inside other work, much the way a painting student might go through a Monet period, a Picasso period and a Pollock period in order to understand viscerally the workings of those minds. The experience of process and the mastery of making became paramount.

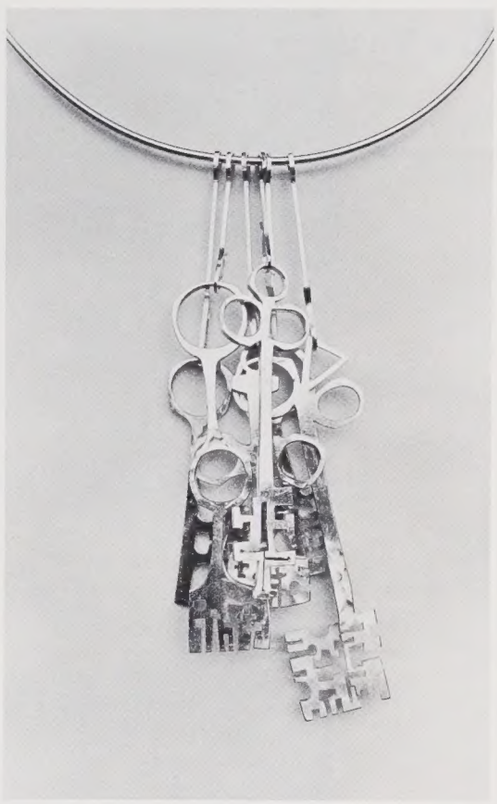
Al Pine's metamorphosis happened at Cranbrook, where he was accepted as a grad student in Industrial Design. However, he soon realized that the outcome of industrial design was a drawing from which someone else would fabricate the object. This was anathema to Pine's desire for hands–on experience. What he did not realize was that his transfer to the Metals Department under Richard Thomas necessitated a change of attitude. His materials exploration now had to be channeled into an investigation that would lead to a personal contribution to the field. His background as an industrial arts major made him feel uncomfortable, inferior, and he determined to make work that would surpass that of any past graduate of Cranbrook. Therefore, he poured over past theses, trying out techniques and mastering them, and established his own original thesis topic on forging techniques as applied to contemporary jewelry. He also experimented widely with casting, as classmate Don Wright had begun using the casting machine that had previously lain idle in the Cranbrook studio. An adjunct to the Cranbrook years was a Fulbright in Germany in the early 1960s. In fact, Pine was the first American silversmith ever accepted in Germany as a Fulbright student. In 1962, upon his return from Germany, Pine was offered the job of teaching general craft courses at California State University at Long Beach. He took the job, specializing in metal– and woodwork, as well as occasional three–dimensional design courses.

The brief summary of Pine's career is meant as background for an understanding of how his work came to be in step with the California crafts movement. The period when Pine did most of his jewelry was soon after he arrived in California, from the mid–60s to mid–70s. Much of the work is gold or silver, forged or cast, the directness of technique clearly apparent in the final piece. However, a complex imagery operates within the pieces, which is abstract yet somehow familiar, associative. This quality causes the work to feel amuletic, a personalized language of symbols that seem to have intrinsic power. Many of the pendants hang in elongated diagrams from simple neckwires. They have an airy, mobile, changeable quality, and appear light and free. Some of the elements appear to be found objects — keys or emblems, ankhs or beads — but they are part of Pine's vocabulary made from a rich, imaginative experience of the history of jewelry and ethnic artifacts. The primitive feeling allies many of the cast sterling brooches with modern sculpture.

Most telling, as Eudorah Moore put it, of Pine's evolution of his craft training to a "totality of experience," were his subsequent sabbatical leaves to Japan, the







Left to right:

Neckpiece, *14k gold, fused*

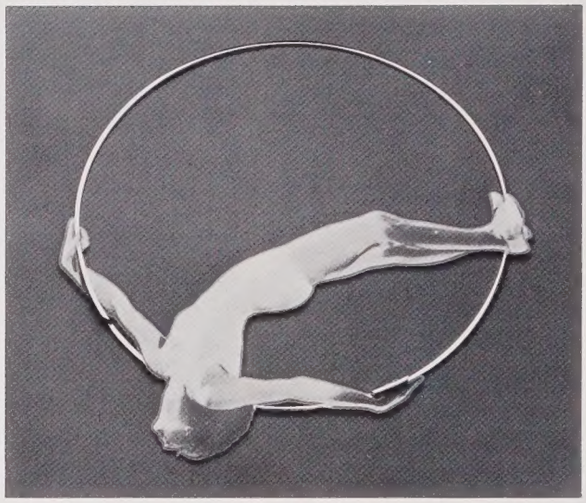
Neckpiece, *14k gold, forged and embossed, late 1960s*

Keys, Hoop Pendant, *sterling silver, forged, 2 – 4" in length*

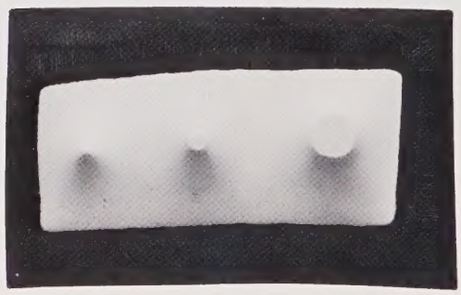
Middle East, Indonesia and China, which, while exposing him to a wealth of ancient and native techniques and work, curtailed his own jewelrymaking. As Pine expanded his knowledge and appreciation of the the field, his interest in his own making of finite objects waned. In its place, his teaching capabilities were enriched by the addition of thousands of on–site slides of native metalsmiths working in primitive and sophisticated techniques as well as work from museums and private collections. Pine's legacy as an extraordinary teacher is the roster of graduates who have gone on to make names for themselves as teachers and practitioners in the field. Among them are Al Ching, Marcia Lewis, Gary Griffin, Joe Girtner, Chris Sublett, Linda Watson–Abbott, Carolyn Utter Radakovitch, David Keens, Joe Cornet, Irene Mori, Kay Yee and Hal Ross.

Al Pine's conceptual exploration of crafts involves continual probing into the role of the metalsmith and his working methodology. He has done this through extensive travels, yet he has honed his perception to be just as capable of finding an inspiration in his own back yard. An example of this is the story he likes to tell about Claire Falkenstein who one summer was invited to Long Beach as part of an international sculpture symposium. The school allowed her to work where she liked and she chose the patio outside the metalsmithing/jewelry studio. One day outside his window Pine notices a woman pounding on a big–diameter copper pipe with a tiny ball peen hammer, physically squeezing the pipe down, and he muses sarcastically to himself that it would be useful if the summer school instructors would tell students that it would be ok to use a piece of steel and an anvil to do their work. After finding out that Falkenstein was actually working on a large fountain to be installed at the school, Pine became intrigued with her technique. For two exhilerating days, he investigated all the possibilities that squeezing and hammering copper tubing could provide, relearning his own lesson about material prejudice and the value of having an open mind even after 25 years of mastery.

—SB



Gijs Bakker, *Neckpiece "George Hoyningen-Huene,"* photograph, plastic laminate, 12" d. Courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery. Photo: George Erml



Pavel Opocensky, *Brooch*, Colorcore, 2½ x 4¼". Courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery. Photo: Jan Frank

The Helen Drutt Gallery Philadelphia / New York

by Toni Lesser Wolf

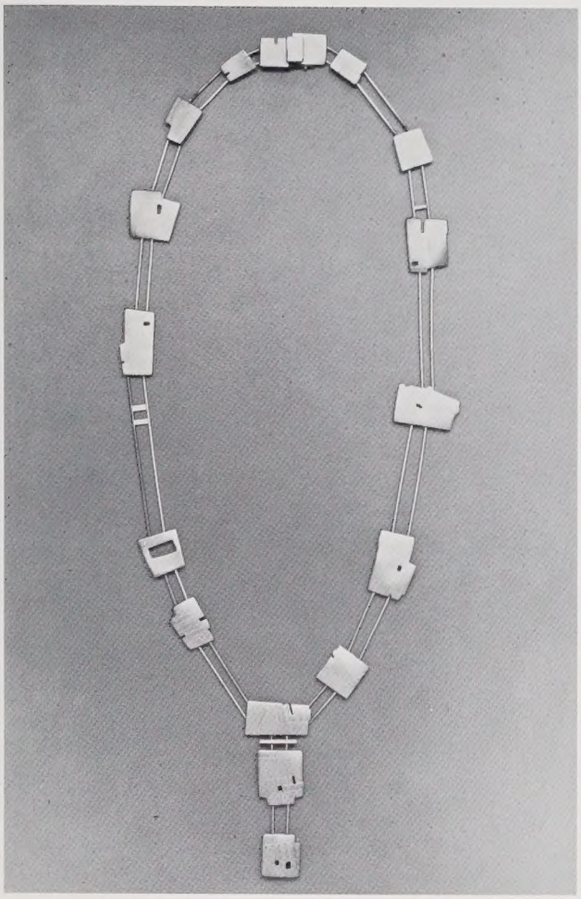
In preparation for this report on Philadelphia gallery owner/director, Helen Drutt, I had done a fair amount of background research – thumbing through past articles in Philadelphia newspapers and periodicals, national and international publications, etc. But it wasn't until I spent a day at her recently opened New York gallery, observing first-hand, this "eggbeater" of a woman (as one writer so aptly described her) that I truly began to understand why she is so well respected by artists, scholars and patrons.

During my visit, I watched her patiently approach prospective customers. She is a born teacher and believes it is her obligation to educate her clientele. "It is the responsibility of the art dealer," says Drutt, "to complete the creative cycle begun by the artist; to be articulate and to communicate the historical context and formal aspects of the work to the public." I also witnessed her irrepressible joy when some of Peter Skubic's jewelry students, visiting the United States from Cologne, stopped by the gallery just to present her with a waterball from a town in Germany – these toys, with "snow" floating above plastic land and cityscapes, being her, not so well-known, collecting passion.

Nothing escapes her! Her mind is a vault of facts and anecdotes relating to post-World War II craft, especially since the 1960s. Although her galleries offer works in a variety of media, our concern here is solely with contemporary jewelry. "Initially my reasons for owning them [jewelry] were in order to promote my newly born interest in modern crafts. It was logical that no one could carry a vessel or chair into a meeting. Wearing a brooch was no different from being a living billboard. Jewelry acted as a catalyst for questions and queries from museum directors, curators, acquaintances, students and strangers."

In 1965, she visited Philadelphia jeweler, Stanley Lechtzin (who was then, as now, teaching in the metals program at Tyler School of Art) and was impressed by a nearly completed brooch that incorporated the esthetic qualities of painting and sculpture. The following incident is an example of Drutt's success as a walking advertisement for modern, handmade, American jewelry: On a subsequent trip to Dublin, Drutt met Graham Hughes, then Director of London's Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths. After admiring the Lechtzin brooch she was wearing, Hughes invited Lechtzin to have an exhibition at Goldsmith's Hall.

In 1967, she become a founding member and executive director of the Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen, an organization comprised of 30 artists affiliated with the faculties of Philadelphia art colleges and universities (in addition to those who maintained independent studios). She remained in this unpaid position for seven years, during which time she organized many exhibitions, including the first David Watkins/Wendy Ramshaw exhibition to be held in America.



Rena Koopman, *Necklace*. Courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery.
Photo: Andrew Dean Powell

Olaf Skoogfors, *Pendant*, sterling silver, ivory; constructed with reticulated sections, 10 x 5¾" overall, 1973.
Courtesy: Helen Drutt Gallery. Photo: George Erml

In 1973, she accepted a faculty position at Philadelphia College of Art to teach the first course in the history of modern crafts and in February, 1974 opened the Helen Drutt Gallery. Among the jewelers represented in its inaugural exhibition were Amy Buckingham, Toni Goessler-Snyder, Stanley Lechtzin, Eleanor Moty, Albert Paley, the Pencil Brothers, Olaf Skoogfors and J. Fred Woell.

German jeweler, Claus Bury's extraordinary influence on American jewelry of the early 1970s has been generally acknowledged. The impact of his 1973 lecture tour, to metalsmithing programs across the United States, cannot be overestimated. Bury had visited Lechtzin and Skoogfors in Philadelphia and stayed at Drutt's home before embarking on this tour. In 1982, as director of the Art Gallery at the Moore College of Art, Drutt mounted a major exhibition of Bury's work, which included site sculpture, metal drawings and technical information (translated from German), as well as jewelry.

What Drutt offers in her galleries is a broadly discursive landscape of contemporary jewelry. It can be playful (Lam de Wolf, Gijs Bakker), structural (Eva Eisler), minimal (Giampaolo Babetto), organic (Pavel Opocensky), socio-political (Woell, Bruno Martinazzi) or primitive (Breon O'Casey). It can applaud technique (Francesco Pavan), be narrative (Manfred Bischoff) or just plain elegant (Max Fröhlich). Mostly, she is interested in the quality and originality of unique ideas – the artist's vision.

She feels the work of the 1970s, greatly influenced by Paley and Bury and their experimentation with nontraditional jewelry-making materials, has evolved into a renewed interest in precious metals and gemstones. This occurrence, she feels, is due to three factors: the reconsideration of permanency in jewelry, the dangers of working with toxic materials and a reaction to minimalism. As a result, artists seem to be making decorative and ornamental statements again.

Drutt is exceedingly optimistic about the future of jewelry. The private collector is the key to the survival of this art form, she believes, and, little by little, she sees jewelry entering the fine art mainstream, the way ceramics and glass have done already.

The crucial point about Helen Drutt's art gallery, which shows handmade craftwork, is that it is just that – an *art gallery*. There is no hierarchy of forms. Functional and nonfunctional works, paintings, sculptures, textiles, vessels and jewelry coexist comfortably and even complement one another. Sculptures by Pavel Opocensky and Bruno Martinazzi are displayed alongside their jewelry, as are paintings and jewelry by Breon O'Casey. Jewelry, to Drutt, is simply portable art, scaled to the human body.

The Helen Drutt Gallery, New York/Philadelphia just celebrated its 15th anniversary, January 28 – February 24, 1989.

Toni Lesser Wolf is a jewelry historian, lecturer, curator and writer living in New York.

Euthanasia Cup, bone, copper, 4½" d. x 7"h.

Enthanasia Cup, bone, copper, 2½" d. x 5½" h.

Curtis LaFollette – Holloware

Hughes fine Art Center Gallery, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND
February 27 – March 10, 1989
by Tony Kiendl

The imposing figure who created these delicate, curvaceous teapots relishes paradox. As LaFollette admits, "It is a fundamental principle of my existence that I love things that appear to contradict themselves but are really rational – that really have this rational base, but yet they seem to be either emotional or totally random in their existence." He believes that contradictions consistently do not appear in the holloware, but they do. Another contradiction.

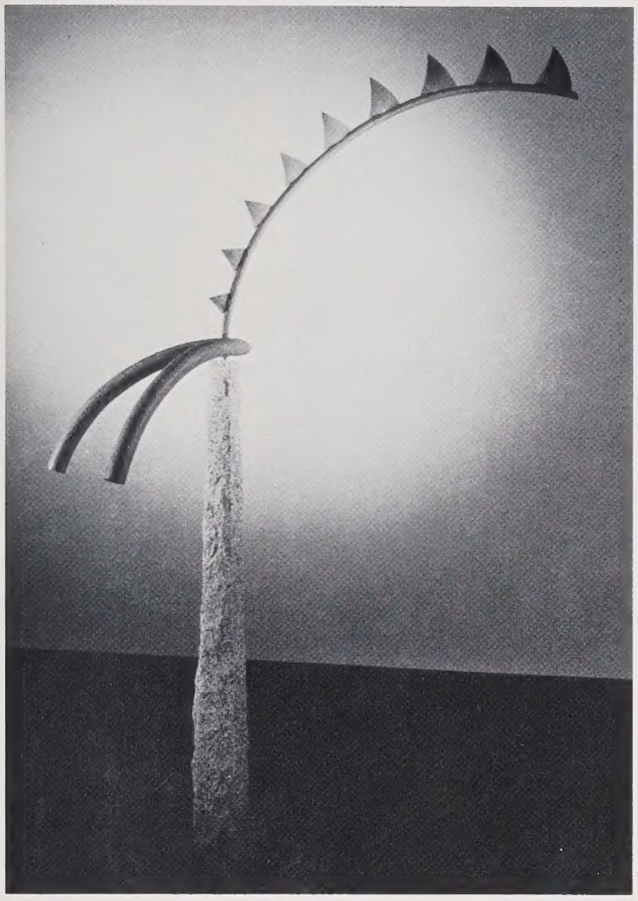
The pieces in the exhibit are mostly sketches – many created to reconstruct and then solve problems encountered by his students. This factor together with the informal and open presentation are welcome in the academic setting of the gallery, as they make it easy for LaFollette's personality and beliefs to be readily understood.

LaFollette's conical, pointed *Teapot #21* is threatening. Functionally, the vessel embodies the spirit of a Japanese tea ceremony – harmonious, tranquil, contemplative. Simultaneously, by its shape, it juxtaposes the peaceful domesticity of the teapot with the violent potential of a sharp weapon.

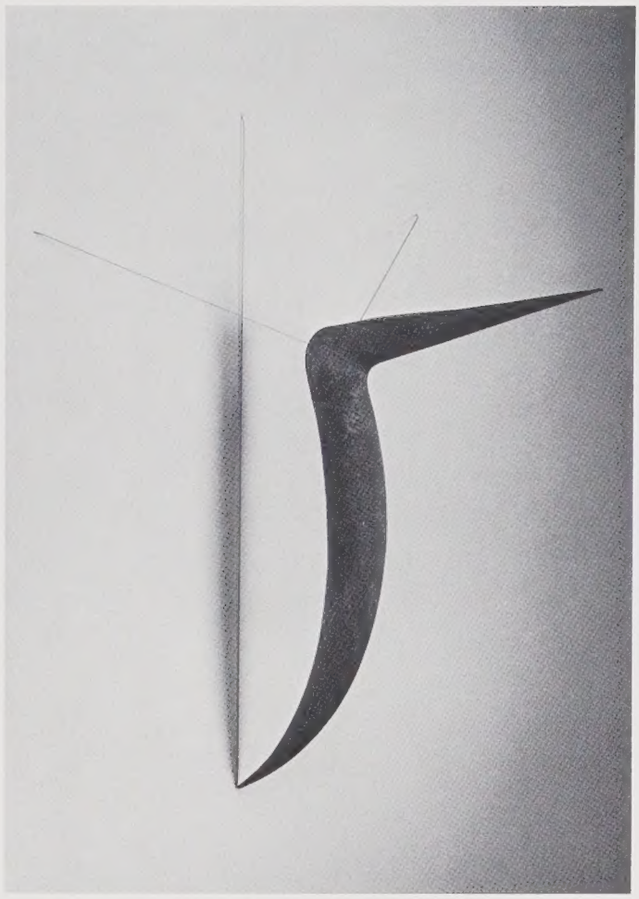
LaFollette makes song of this struggle between sharpness and gentleness, peace and violence, yin and yang. This repeated study of contradiction is the most intriguing aspect of the exhibit. The contradictions found throughout the show force the viewer to re-evaluate the relationship between peace and violence, art and craft, reality and fantasy.

The artist's Dadaist fantasies are realized in a series of three *Euthanasia Cups*. These cups, made from metal and bone, heighten the underlying study of organic and inorganic, archaic and contemporary. When viewed with the neighboring teapots, another paradox develops. The viewer is forced to consider objects for daily pleasantries with objects for dying – all in one breath. One gets a sense of the contradictions not adding up, but rather squaring and then cubing.

Tony Kiendl is an artist and writer living in Grand Forks, ND.



Knees, copper, granite, 103 x 27 x 139"



Cross, copper, sterling silver, cable, 31 x 25 x 19"

Jonathan Bonner

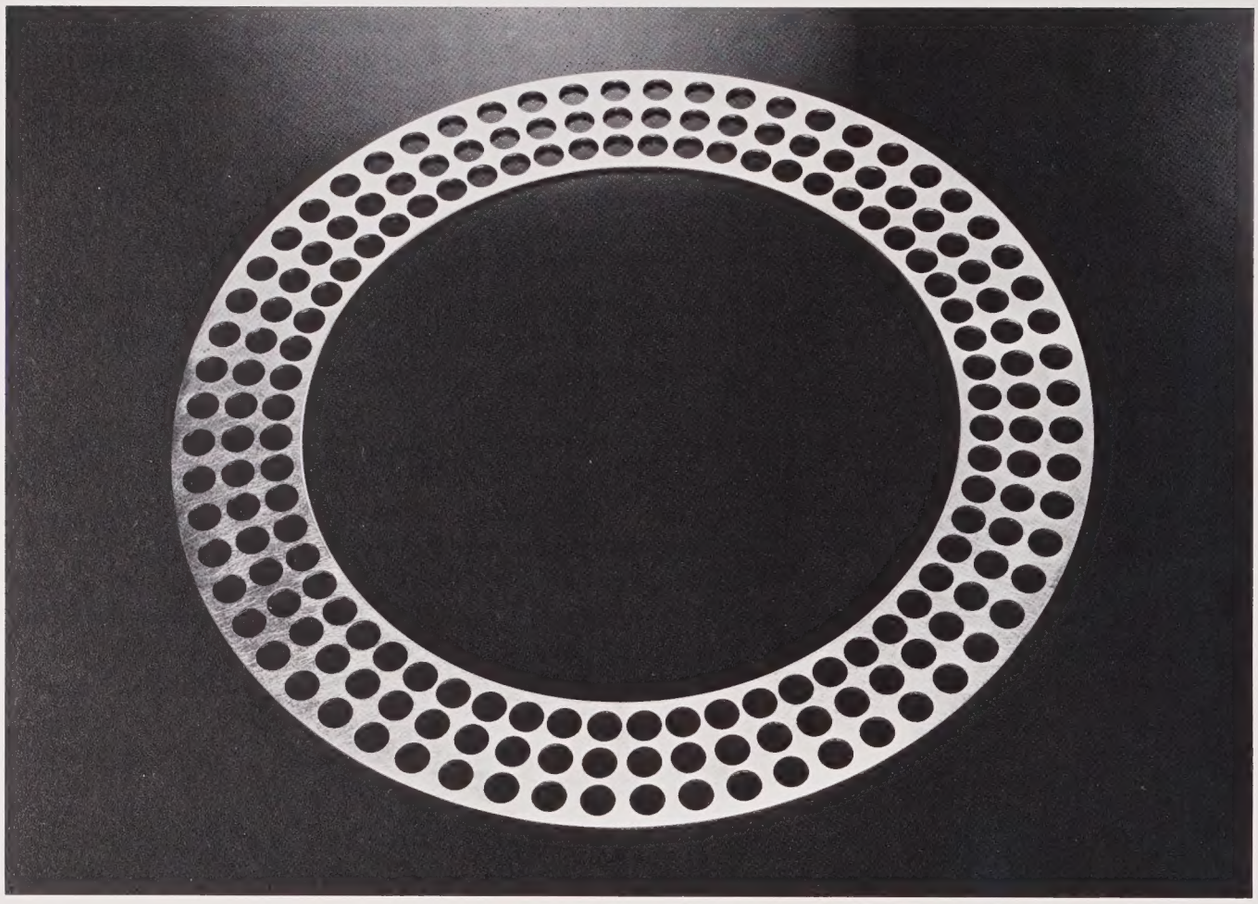
Heller Gallery, New York
April 1 – 23, 1989
by Vanessa S. Lynn

Since the early 1980s, Jonathan Bonner has embraced the weathervane as a sculptural analogy and has been honing it with a Minimalist's hand ever since. At their best, past vanes capture the essential linear gesture of Bonner's figurative subjects. Whether it be a crescent bean, a man-o-war or a zoomorphic fantasy, Bonner inevitably seizes the core of his model in a spare, yet spirited graphic rendering. As the vanes became larger (from nine- to 14-feet high, on average), these space drawings swing outdoors like animated streaks against the sky.

The latest pieces call to mind Brancusi's work, not as much for their pared-down gesture as for the way both minimize the sculpture/base dichotomy. Bonner's earlier weathervanes were a tripartite copper figure, support rod and incidental stone base. Now, in his best works, he often eliminates the vertical rod and brings the granite base up to where it becomes part of the sculpture's composition, maintaining the pivot necessary for the vane to function. At the same time, the arm, with its array of sail-like elements, descending in size from the fulcrum, projects upwards and diagonally from the base. Bonner's sensitivity to material densities, to complementary color and to the juxtaposition of movement and stasis marks significant progress in his ability to achieve a sculptural totality.

Nevertheless, Bonner has not yet exhausted his fascination with the expressive possibility of line in space. Five wall-mounted pieces employ a single, simple, animated form, suspended by a careful configuration of prefabricated metal cable (bronze or stainless steel). Here again, the support is integral to the totality, as when a lithe copper right-angle stays aloft by a symmetrical arrangement of cable. Seen head-on, the piece, aptly titled *Moose* mimics the animal's muzzle, and the cable configuration unequivocally describes its unique antler profile. Other works in this series use colored wood for the suspended element, but the material difference, in contrast to the weathervanes, is of secondary importance as the descriptive capabilities of line remain paramount.

Vanessa S. Lynn is a writer living in New York.



Torus 280 (B1), gilded brass

David Watkins

Contemporary Applied Arts, London, April 7 – May 6
Helen Drutt Gallery, New York, June 1 – 30, 1989
by Deborah Norton

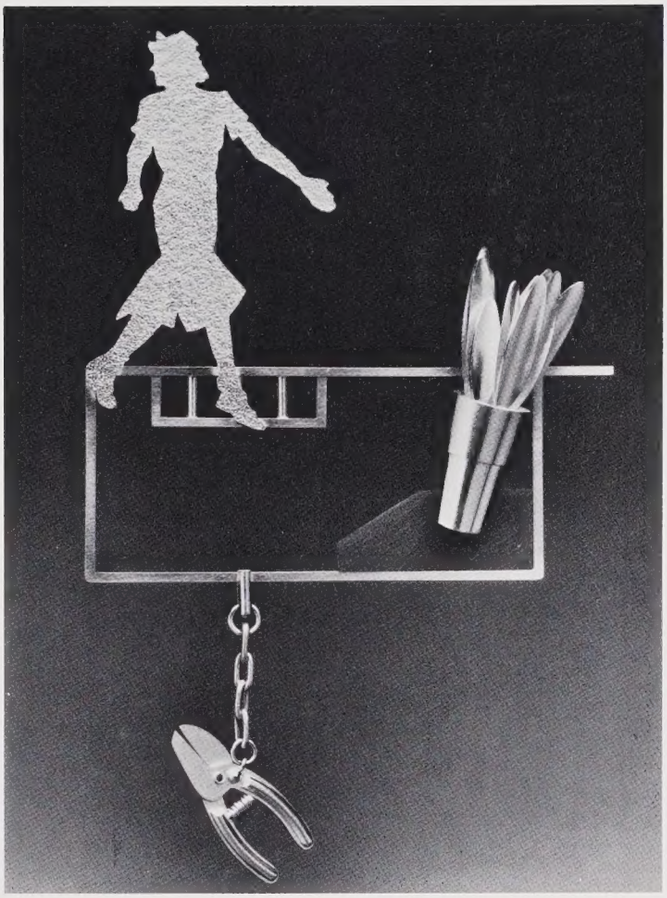
David Watkins's series of rigid neckpieces all begin with a flat, circular collar, which is then not so much adorned as explored. Using circles, lines and cogs, he repeats these elements over and over in various combinations and permutations, enhanced by a sensitive choice of materials and surface treatment. For instance, in *Seeker*, made of black Colorcore, the outer edge of the circular collar forms a cogwheel. The exact design is repeated in *Matrix I* but this time done in brass. In *Inversion 2*, the cogs are on the inner edge of the neck collar and the material is Colorcore covered in gold leaf. He takes a similar approach with a set of neckpieces based entirely on circles. In *Torus 280 (T1)*, the collar is pierced by a single ring of small circular holes. He has made this piece in untreated titanium, which catches the light and gives off soft shades of blues and grays. He uses the same motif in *Torus 280 (T2)* but, in this case, there are two rings of parallel circles and he has slightly anodized the titanium to subtly enhance the colors. And so it goes with the next piece in gilded brass having three rings of circles and another, exactly the same but made of untreated titanium. Each piece seems to complement and reinforce the one beside it and together they make for a very thorough investigation of a severely restricted vocabulary.

This minimal repetition is what gives these pieces their spiritual presence – the fact that the viewer is left to contemplate in depth that which is most basic without being distracted by the superfluous or superficial. Consequently, the most successful piece in the show is also the simplest. *Matrix IX* is a narrow, circular collar with a horizontal linear strip attached at the top and balanced at the bottom by a similar vertical strip. The extreme austerity of this minimal design is softened by the faint scratches of the hand-finishing process left on the gilded-brass surface. Reminiscent of ancient religious symbols such as the Egyptian ankh or Incan geometrics, it has an undeniable mystical quality.

These elegant neckpieces, when worn, create an unexpected antithesis to the softness and flexibility of the human body because of their rigidity and machined precision. But when displayed in cases, the objects are forms worthy of contemplation in their own right, giving the viewer a chance to leisurely ponder their hidden mysteries.

Deborah Norton is a contributing editor to Metalsmith, *living in London.*

Tax Deductible, brooch, sterling silver, fabricated, 4½ x 5½ x ⅜".
Photo: Dave DeVries



And Over Here..., brooch, sterling silver, coral acrylic, fabricated, 5 x 6½ x ¾". Photo: Dave DeVries

Christina Smith

CDK Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
November 5 – 30, 1988
by Carolyn Novin

Bold scale, representational imagery, skilled fabrication of sterling silver and acrylic, all describe Christina Smith's new jewelry. Previously, Smith fashioned acrylic into miniature objects; here, she used sterling for details and acrylic as a structural color.

More open compositionally than her earlier work, these pieces integrate narrative content within formal designs. For example, because the dog, house and burglar in *Tax Deductible* are not in correct proportion, the viewer feels threatened by the intruder, who appears larger than one's home.

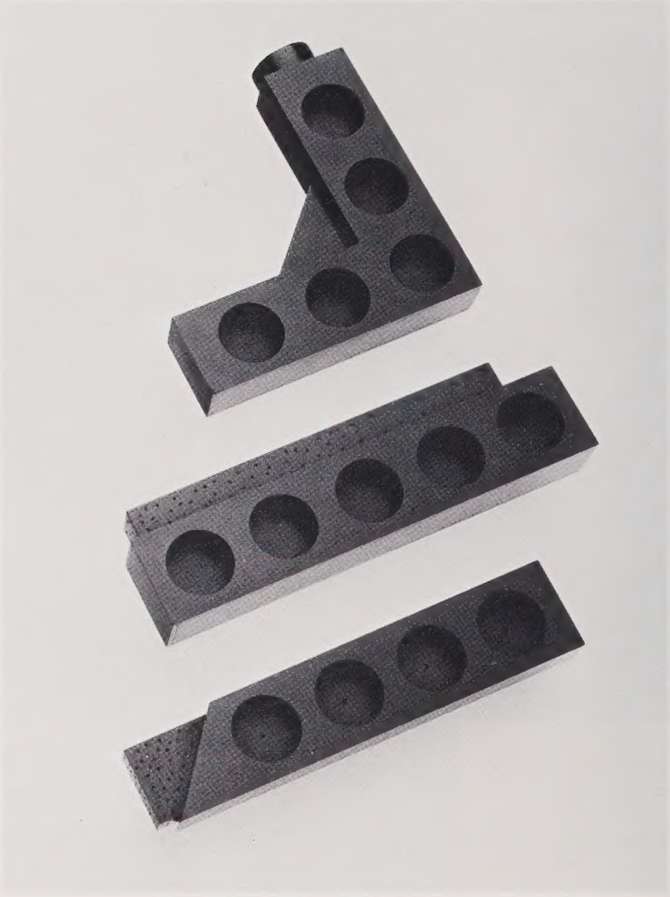
As in a freeze-frame, each brooch depicted a specific moment in an event or relationship. While creating focal depth with size variation, overlap and perspective lines, Smith undercut the illusion in *Flipper Did My Wash* by adding conspicuously flat figures. Such interaction between volume and flatness maintained tension. Each brooch was both kinetic and static; animated characters who gestured, perched, slouched or strode, plus the actual movement of a tiny washboard, a pair or shears or a circle maze dangling from its chain contravened the square-wire framework around which they were arranged.

Compared to other narrative jewelry and to Smith's bolo ties and bracelets in this show, her brooches felt contemporary because of their topical subjects. More to the point, they embodied the disturbing union of emotional occasion and cool detachment pervading contemporary society. For, despite their familiarity that involved the wearer as part of the narrative, the formal effect was of control, balance and distance. This paradox persists in my mind as an unsettling aspect of the work.

The brooches, each given a descriptive title, told their stories with incomplete information and featureless actors who, caught in a spotlight, shielded their privacy with reflective, sparkling surfaces. Perhaps a shadow play, the story is known only by the poses and relationships of silhouettes, as Christina Smith's tantalizing scenarios remain illusory.

Carolyn Novin is a metalsmith and writer living in Los Angeles.

Brooch, black acrylic, 7 x 4 x 1½". Photo: George Erml



Three Brooches, black acrylic, largest 4 x 2 x ½". Photo: George Erml

Lisa Gralnick

CDK Gallery, New York City
April 4 – May 6, 1989
by Jill Slosburg-Ackerman

Lisa Gralnick's new, large acrylic brooches and bracelets are difficult. Compared to her earlier pieces, which are more straightforward and seductive in representing "black" notions of architecture and weapons, the latest work is enigmatic in its varied allusions to industrial-scientific artifacts, decorative motifs and pure geometry. As fragments, they don't seem to be totally resolved. Somehow, these pieces don't make decipherable, communicative compositions, perhaps because they are more ambitious in their deviation from pure minimal forms.

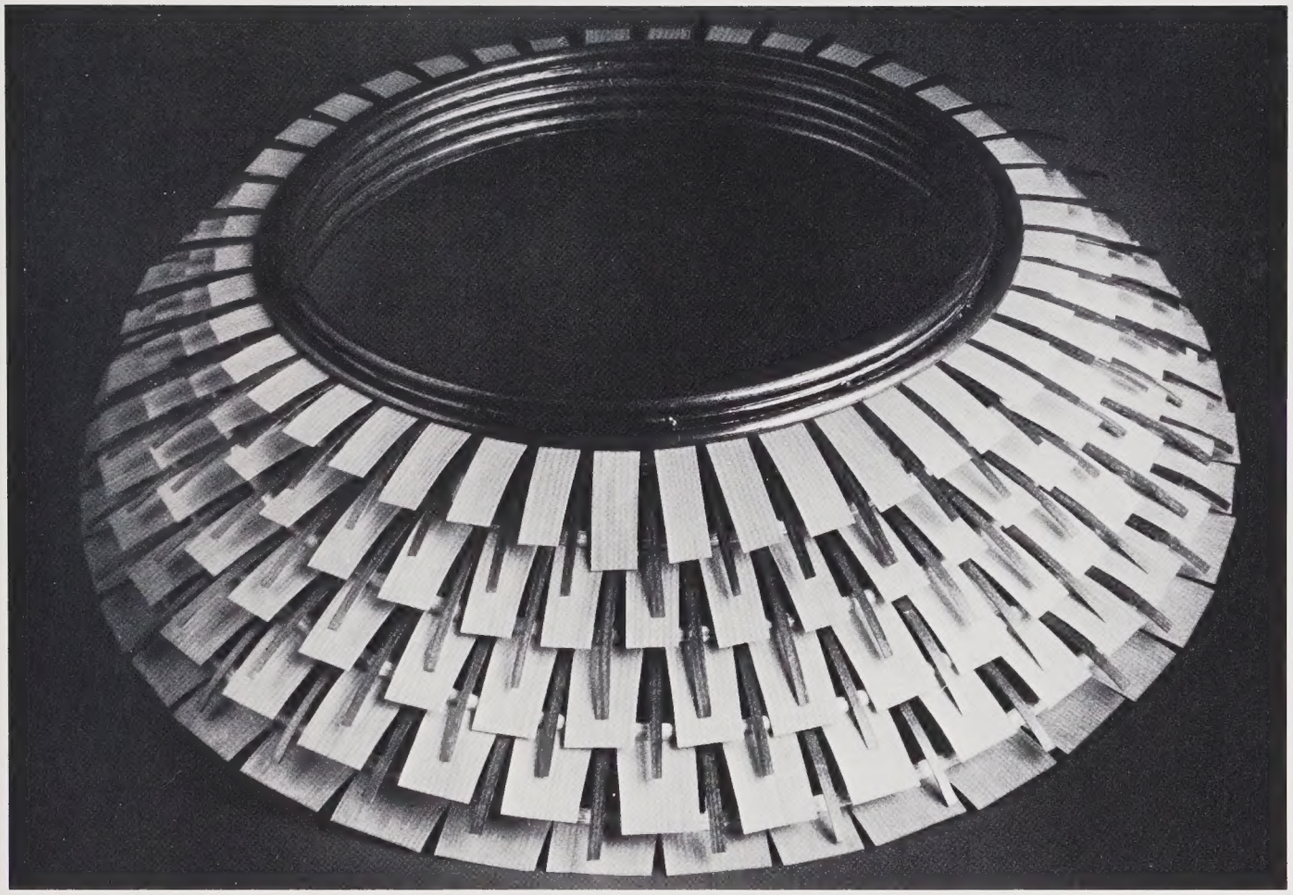
Her customary use of black acrylic saturates her forms literally and metaphorically with an irony that underscores the nonprecious quality of the material. What is unexpected, however, is the sheer lightness of the big brooches (5" and 6" tall) and bracelets (3½" cubed), extending the limit of what is wearable without physical discomfort or risk to the wearer's clothing. The work forces us to ask what is the difference between jewelry as small sculpture and jewelry as wearable decorative objects, between jewelry as small objects and sculpture in general.

Gralnick's allegiance to jewelry is illustrated by each brooch's abrupt flat back. The pieces meet the body decisively, invoking an unavoidable dynamic between wearer and object. They complete each other, magnifying the vast differences between organic and industrial forms. Gralnick's jeweler's scale, too small to have the presence of sculpture, emphasizes the public nature of jewelry as decoration, yet large enough to invite dialogue in the suggestion of badge or emblem.

The conflict in Gralnick's work lies in the provocative ideas in her visually unresolved objects. In defense of these "uneasy" pieces, there is a compelling sense of exploration and redefinition. In its spirited severity, this work rejects conventional assumptions and offers a courageous departure.

A 16-page catalog of the exhibition, including color illustrations, with foreword by Henry P. Raleigh and text by Michael Dunas and Sarah Bodine is available for $10 from Garth Clark Gallery, 24 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019.

Jill Slosburg-Ackerman is a jeweler and sculptor and professor of art at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.



Birds Jewel III, neckpiece, wood (veneer), cane, painted. Photo: Espen Tollefsen

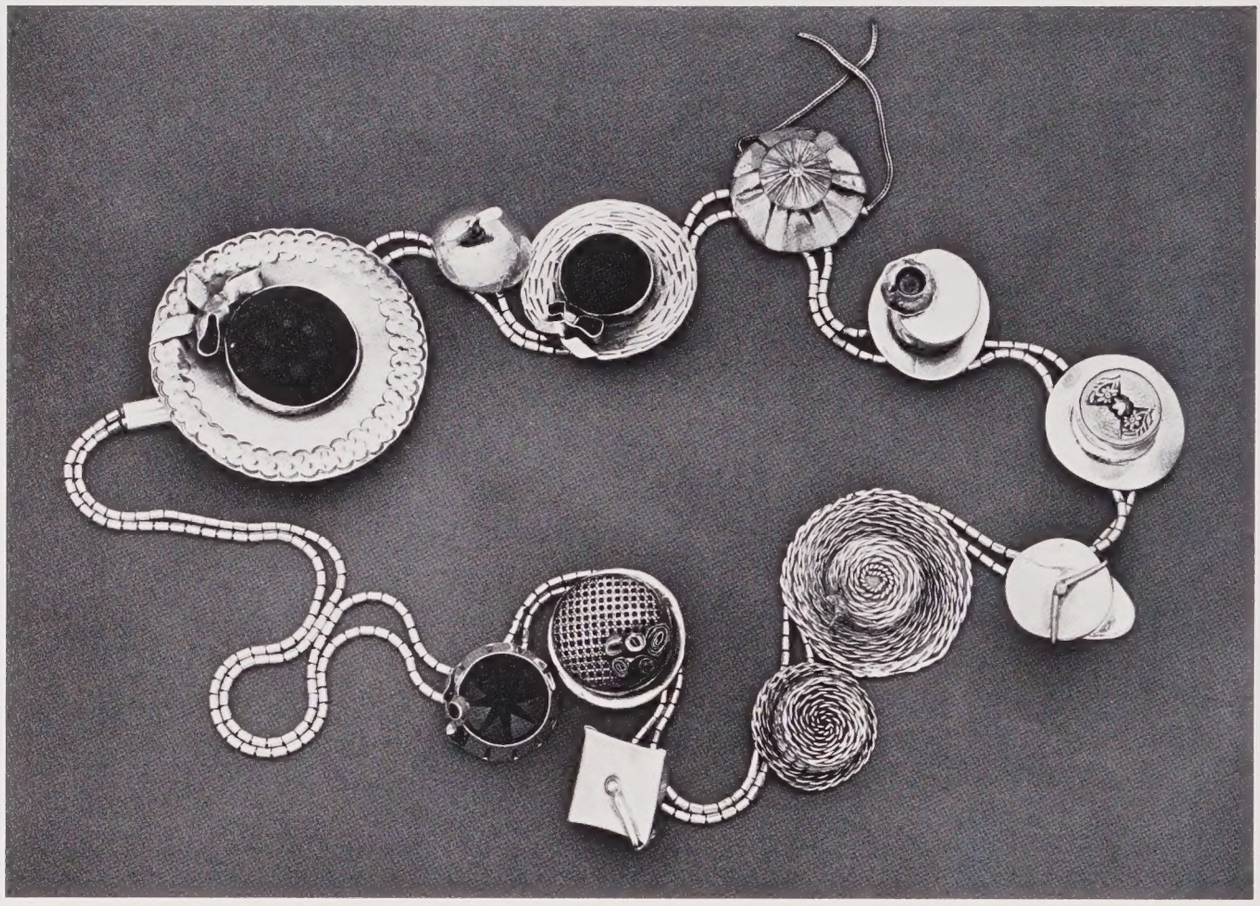
Gry Eide

Galerie RA, Amsterdam
April 22 – May 31, 1989
by James Evans

Gry Eide is, for me, one of the most "Norwegian" of the Norwegian jewelers. She takes her inspiration from rambles in the countryside, folkloric objects and traditional Nordic architecture. Never rushing from one style to another or one material to another, she remains true and consistent to her vision, which may be termed poetic. As she writes in the catalog: "The making of jewelry is to me a time-consuming process. The pieces are the fruits of associations which are awakened throughout their creation. It may be the mating dance of a bird in the forest (some of her pieces are titled *Birds Jewel I or II* or a pitch-black stave church dripping from the spring thaw, a time-worn painted door, fairytales and sagas, caterpillars and butterflies, old tools or a frost-covered barn door."

There are times when catalog statements like the above, leave me rolling my eyes in antiromantic revulsion but, in Eide's case, the work displays the sincerity and sensitivity implied by the catalog notes. The pieces are beautiful to touch, behold and consider. They are elegant and obviously made with utmost care, skill and love. I did have reservations about one or two pieces, especially *Urban Fruit*, which leaned a little to the kitschy side in its use of lime-sparkled, industrial plastic, an uneasy companion to the cane and natural materials elsewhere in the piece. They also had the effect of slightly subverting the quiescence and rigor of the more harmonious works. But with most of the work of high standard, these are rather small quibbles. The viewer was offered works of excellence and originality. A particular standout was *Tool III*, a handcarved, painted shoulder object, which displayed finesse, superb construction and an instinct for a found wood form, which, when transformed by the maker, became a simple, elegant, respectful and clever work.

James Evans is Principal Lecturer and Course Leader of the Wood, Metals, Ceramics and Plastics course in the Department of Textiles and Three-Dimensional Design at Brighton Polytechnic in England.



Laurie Hall, *Hats Off*, neckpiece, sterling silver, copper, brass. Photo: Richard Nicol

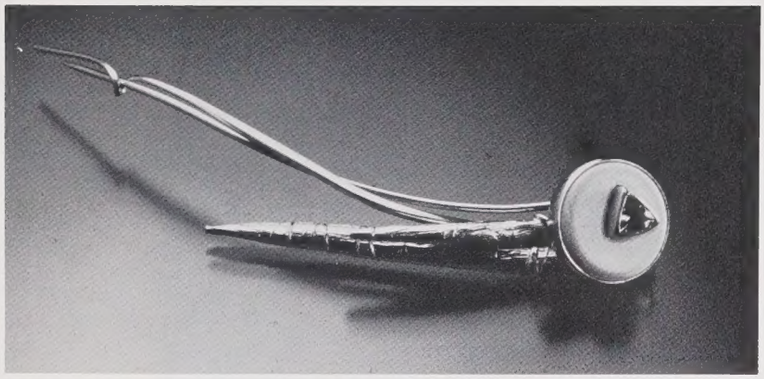
Remembering the Alamo
The 1989 Society of North American Goldsmiths Conference

by Beth Alber

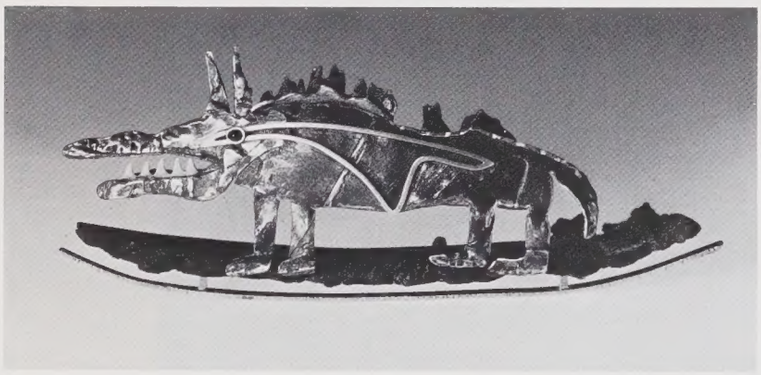
"What's in it for me?" is probably the thought of each SNAG member when the information on the annual conference arrives in the mail. This year was no exception. High on my checklist was the opportunity to travel to a new city away from the last leg of winter, a short break from my classes, the first-hand experience of a different culture and exposure to stimulating exhibitions and program presentations. The organizers of the San Antonio conference, Munya Avigail Upin and Bob Cardinale, managed to create such a multifaceted event. More than any other conference I have attended, the spirit of the place was captured. The program was balanced between social activities, always very important to SNAG conferences, exhibitions and a diverse collection of speakers. The eclectic program was cleverly linked to the culture of the city and the area by speakers who delved into the history of Spanish America, up to and including current architectural trends in the Southwest.

Sandie Zilker and Diane Falkenhagen showed us just how professional a presentation can be. "Emerging Artists" at the MFA level from across the country, selected for their excellence, were presented in an audio-visual confection. The excellent slides were accompanied by music sensitive to each artist's approach. Some of the artists were additionally supported by their own voice-over statements of intent and philosophy. The entire 15 minutes was visually perfect, beautifully coordinated and enriched by audio accompaniment in music and voice, drawing the audience to its feet in ovation. It was the emotional high of the conference. This presentation could be compared to David Tisdale's topic "The Importance of Presentation" where he gave an off-the-cuff address, which proved of little value to the group as a whole and in

Lynne Hull, *Basket #13*, painted aluminum, 18 x 12", 1988



Barbara Mial, *Abandoning Sad Young Men*, brooch, 14k green and yellow, 18k, 22k gold, aquamarine, carved ivory, 3½ x 1 x ½". Photo: Rod McCormick



Enid Kaplan, *Aardvark on Skiis*, brooch, 14k gold, sterling silver, etched brass, onyx, fish teeth, pigments, 1986

particular to the younger artists in attendance. The talk was appropriate for an informal gathering or workshop but not for a formal lecture situation.

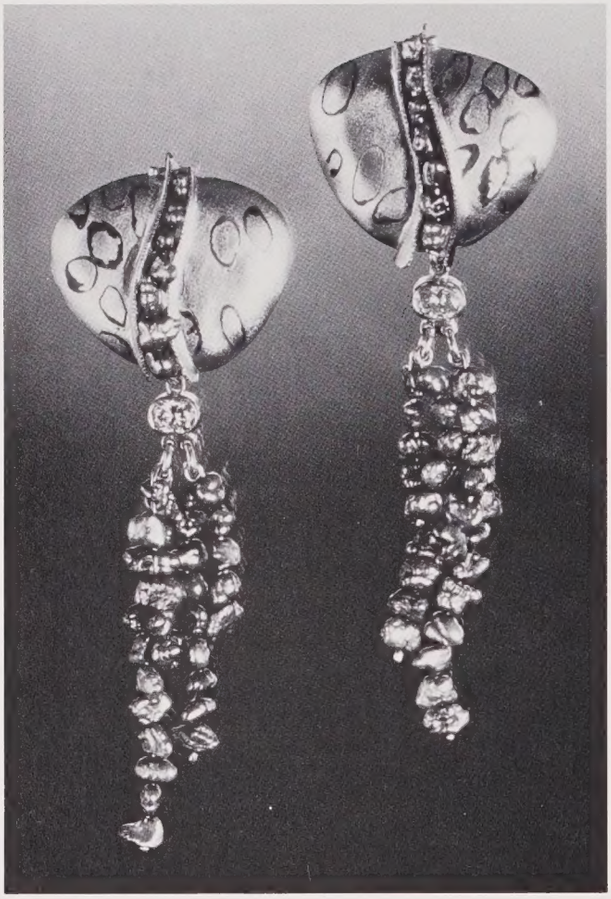
The diversified program was continued with the informative presentation by Gayle Weiss, Director, B'nai B'rith Klutznick Museum, Washington, D.C., whose topic "Masters of Ceremony, Designers of Judaica" revealed many of the mysteries of ceremonial Jewish objects. She discussed the importance of ceremonial vessels to Jewish families and the significance of Jewish holidays and remembrances as part of everyday life. This topic should be of interest to every metalsmith, as this area is one of the few remaining marketplaces left for liturgical work. That evening the talk was clarified even further by the "Contemporary Metal Judaica" exhibition at the Read Stremmel Gallery, where the tremendous range and approach available in the area of contemporary Judaica was offered in ceremonial objects by six artists.

The sense of "place" was amplified by the number of exhibitions planned for our time in San Antonio. The city was our oyster – we were bused to all areas of that beautiful and inviting place. From my perspective, there is definitely a "Texas" or "Southwest" style of living, even though the work in the "Texas Metal Invitational" seemed to be of a national flavor. We live in a time of global communication and it is impossible not to be touched by it. By contrast, the exhibition "Tin Work", curated by Lane Coulter, included examples by Mexico and New Mexico tinsmiths of the period 1850 to 1925 and reflected work of a different era and socio-economic pattern, usually designed for religious use in the home. The one obvious exception in the "Texas Metal Invitational" was by British-born, now San Antonio, architect Isaac Maxwell with his punched metal lamps. These pieces were exquisitely made and seem to have taken a regional idea to new heights. Curators Robert Cardinale and Jim Edwards further reinforced this nationalist approach in their invitation notes. "The artists of the 'Texas Metal Invitational' have helped define a wide range of expression in the metal arts as practiced in Texas. With different attitudes and ideas, they explore the nature of surface, scale and technique as applied to the rich yet difficult character of metal".

Another of the exhibitions in place during the conference was "Six of One, Half-Dozen of the Other" held at the Carver Gallery. This was not a regional show, but the concept was to compare metalsmiths who work exclusively at the bench versus those who teach. Curators Pat Gavin, benchworker, and Claire Holliday, teacher, of San Antonio, could not anticipate the outcome until the exhibition was mounted. As one might have expected, there was no real difference in technical quality, given the participants, but nonetheless, the concept of the exhibition gave the viewer an interesting way to consider and compare the work. The participants were: Jamie Bennett, Pat Flynn, Pat Gavin, Martha Glowacki, Laurie Hall, Enid Kaplin, Barbara Mail, Linda Threadgill, Claire Sanford and Leonard Urso.

As most of us are visual types, this conference combined enough of the visual with the intellectual to keep us happy and stimulated and ready to go home with a new enthusiasm to our solitary studios.

Beth Alber teaches at the Royal Ontario College of Art in Toronto, Canada.



Inclusions & Rockfall, earrings, 14k and 18k gold, silver, Shakudo, pearls, yellow diamonds

On the Rocks, precious and nonprecious married metals, hollow-formed touchstones. Photo: S. Deveaux

Carrie Adell: On the Rocks II

Alianza Gallery, Boston, MA
May 12 – June 24, 1989
by Susan Barahal

Adell's current work is a collection of metal "touchstones." Historically, a touchstone is a black stone used to test the quality of gold. Throughout the years, the word touchstone has come to stand for any criterion used in assessing value. Adell's touchstones, which represent small pieces of the earth, are, perhaps, reminders that we should not lose touch with what is truly valuable.

Each of Adell's rock forms is meticulously fabricated by combining several layers of colored metals. The alternating colors are stacked, sweat-soldered, cut and rolled until the desired thickness of the "sandwich" is achieved. This process is repeated several times in order to expose the many colors and patterns created by the layering and rolling. Known as mokumé, this Japanese method creates a woodgrain appearance traditionally used in the decoration of tsuba, or sword guards.

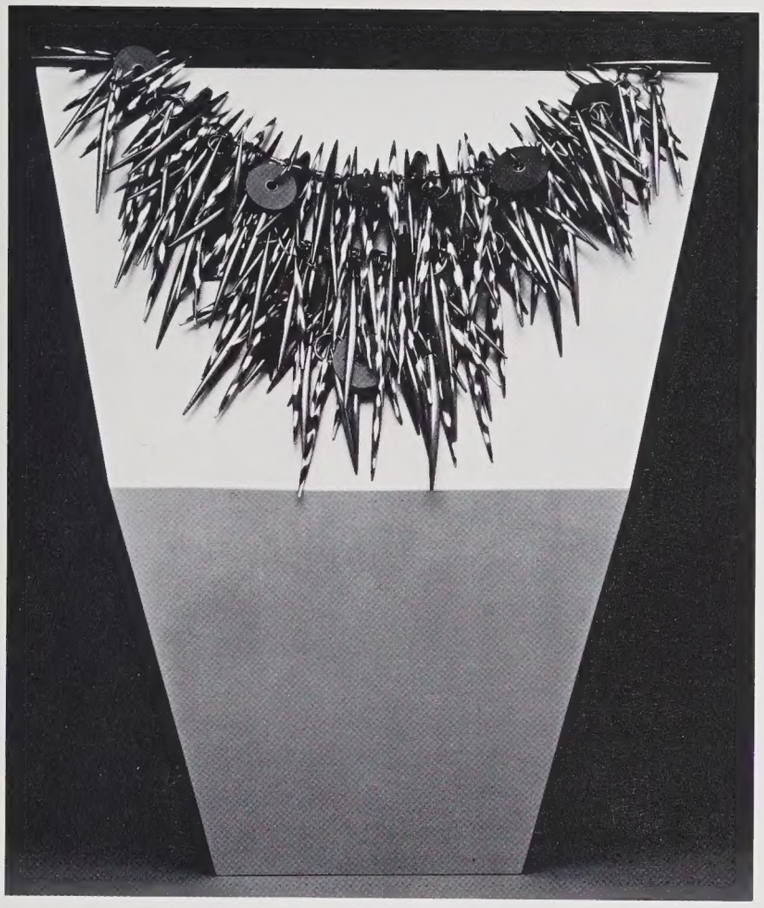
Adell's choice of technique is ideally suited for her touchstones. The inherently organic pattern of the mokumé relates to the shapes of the rock forms. Swirls of sterling silver, copper, gold alloys and bronze form fluid patterns over the surface. Adell also incorporates the Japanese technique of shakudo, a black patina on the alloy of fine gold and copper. A Japanese influence is also evident in Adell's designs, as many of the rock forms have markings recalling the graceful strokes of Japanese calligraphy.

In her *Inclusions and Rockfall* earrings, the rock form is divided by a crevice bursting with "pebbles" of freshwater pearls. The pearls cascade from the "rock" in a three-tiered fall and are delicately connected to it by a faceted and bezeled yellow diamond. Pearls in shades of pink, gray and gold echo the colors and shapes of the mokumé-patterned rocks, from which they seem to emanate.

In a choker, Adell joins the strings of pebblelike pearls with two gold rocks. While functional, this organic clasp is an integral part of the overall design. In fact, the rocklike closure is the focal point of the piece. The rich, shakudo patina of the background provides a vivid contrast to the overlays of white and yellow gold that are complemented by pearls in lustrous shades of blue, purple and gold.

Many of her designs incorporate removable beads, encouraging the wearer not only to change colors and patterns but also to add additional touchstones. In this manner, Adell reminds us of the ancient belief, in which the quantity of one's amulets reflects the degree of one's power.

Susan Barahal is the Decorative Arts Editor for Art New England *magazine and teaches are in the Boston area.*



Echos and Rhythms of Trane, silver, gold, heat and chemical patina

Rachelle Thiewes

CDK Gallery, New York
March 7 – April 1, 1989
by Sue Amendolara

Rachelle Thiewes's jewelry emanates ritualism. Several spicula, varying in size and surface treatment, are used in each piece. The repetition and overlapping of the spicula produce visual rhythm as well as physical movement reminiscent of African tribal adornment. Thiewes's work, likewise, relates to the idea that messages of sexuality, availability, status and seduction are transmitted by wearing jewelry. These "tribal" pieces are boldly oversized, demanding the endurance of the wearer and confronting the viewer at first glance. And although large and aggressive, the work appears graceful and elegant on or off the body due to Thiewes's sensitivity to proportion.

The pieces are predominantly sterling silver with a variety of surface treatments: polished, matt, patinated black or with "mottled stripes" of black and white. Detailing is achieved by using 18k gold rings and, in some cases, 18k gold cones and patterned slate.

The necklace *Echoes and Rhythms of Trane*, the highlight of the exhibition, exudes spiritual energy. The use of sterling silver for the spiculum, patterned slate discs and gold rings strengthen the tribal and ceremonial feelings. Countless tapered tubes occupy its three tiers and give the necklace a wonderful tactile quality that allows it to appear light and feathery when worn. Thiewes seemed obsessed with this necklace because each detail is intricately worked out.

Two of Thiewes's bracelets, also untitled, are similarly designed with a large circle and various spicula connected slightly above center, decorated with gold and slate details. Exhibited on the points of the tapered tubes, they appear to be standing guard as powerful statements of protection and security.

Sue Amendolara is an artist living in New York.

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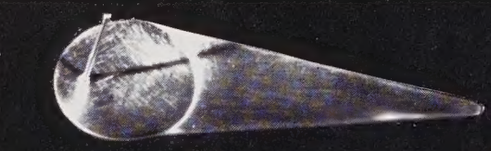

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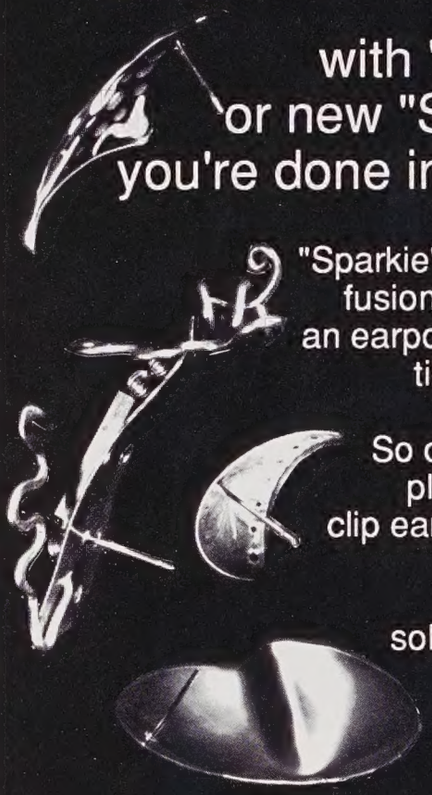

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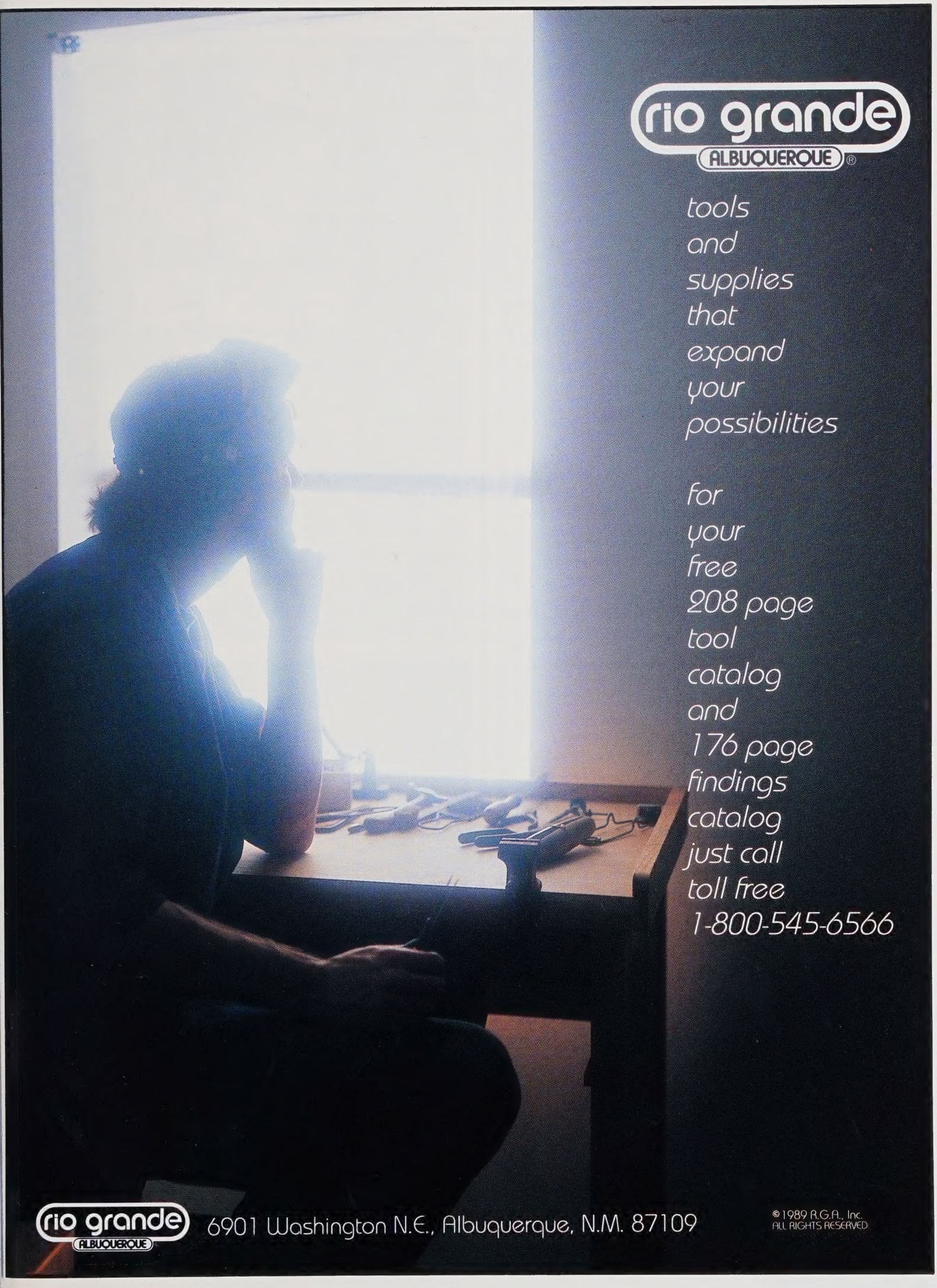
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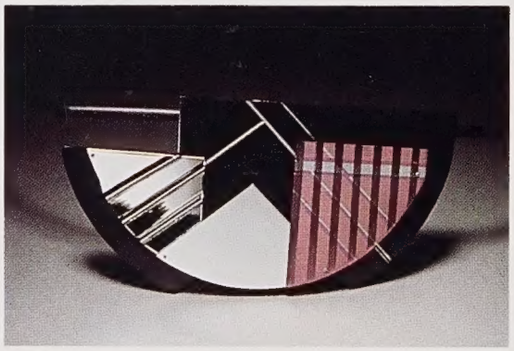

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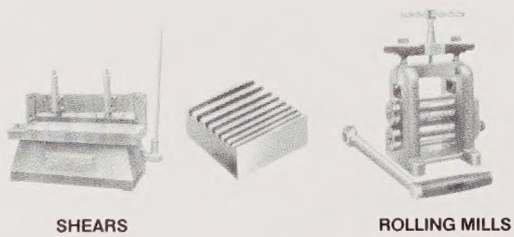

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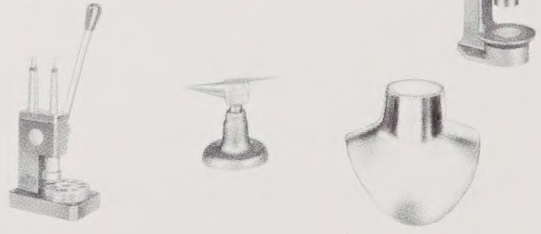

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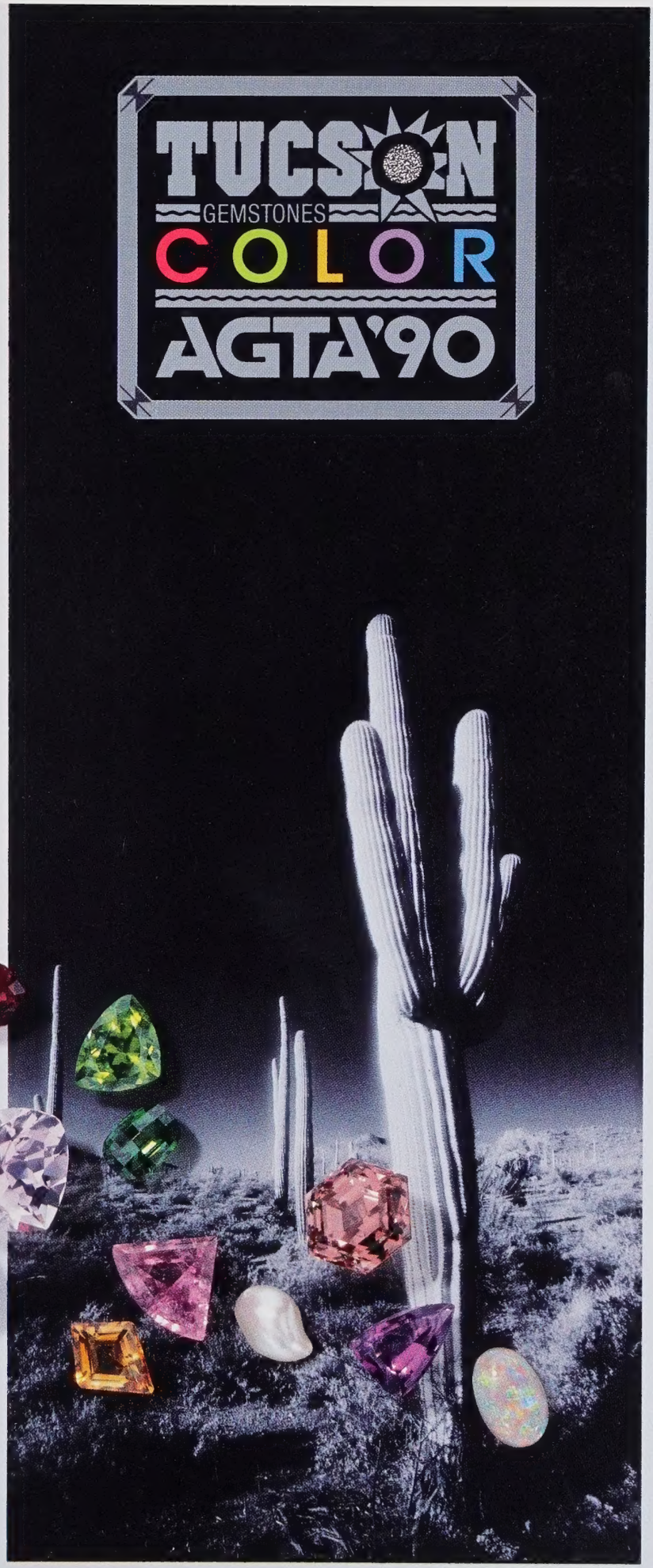

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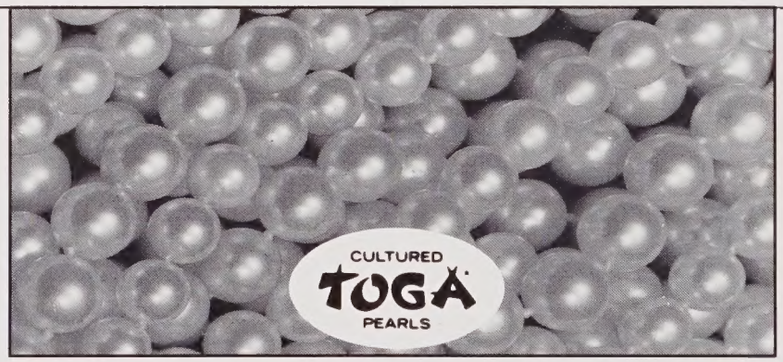

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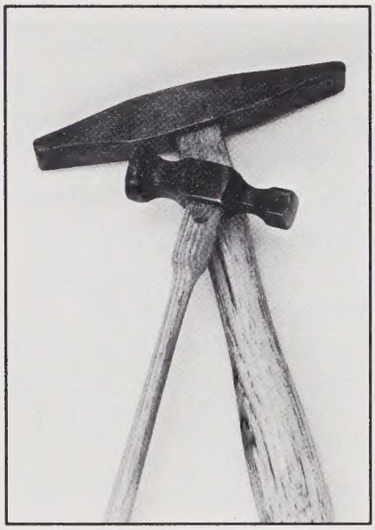

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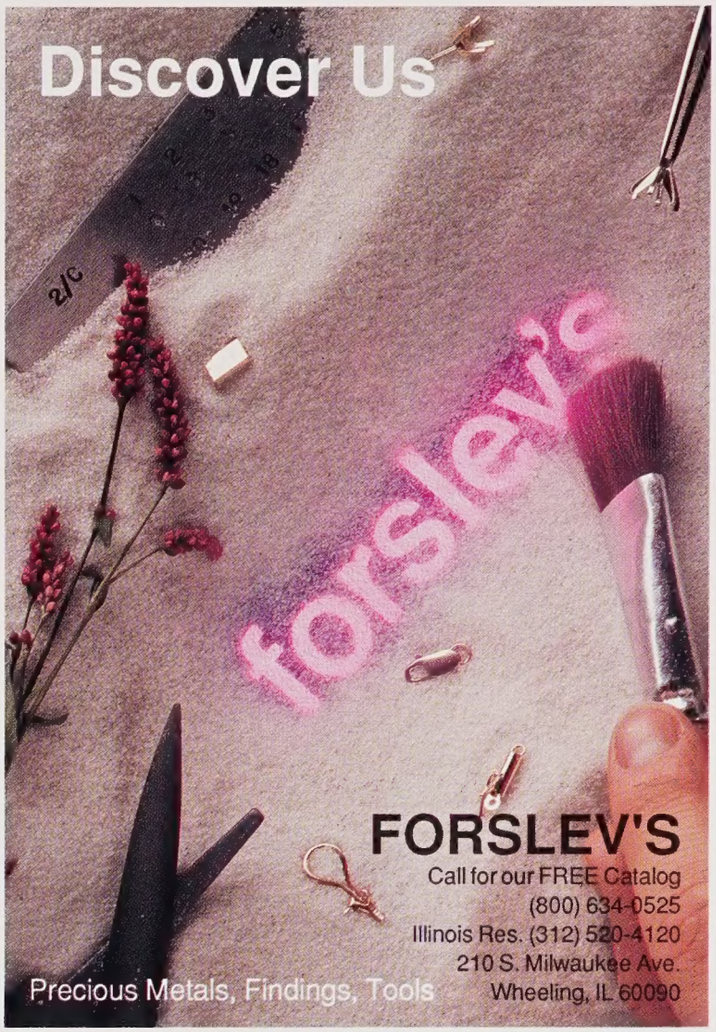

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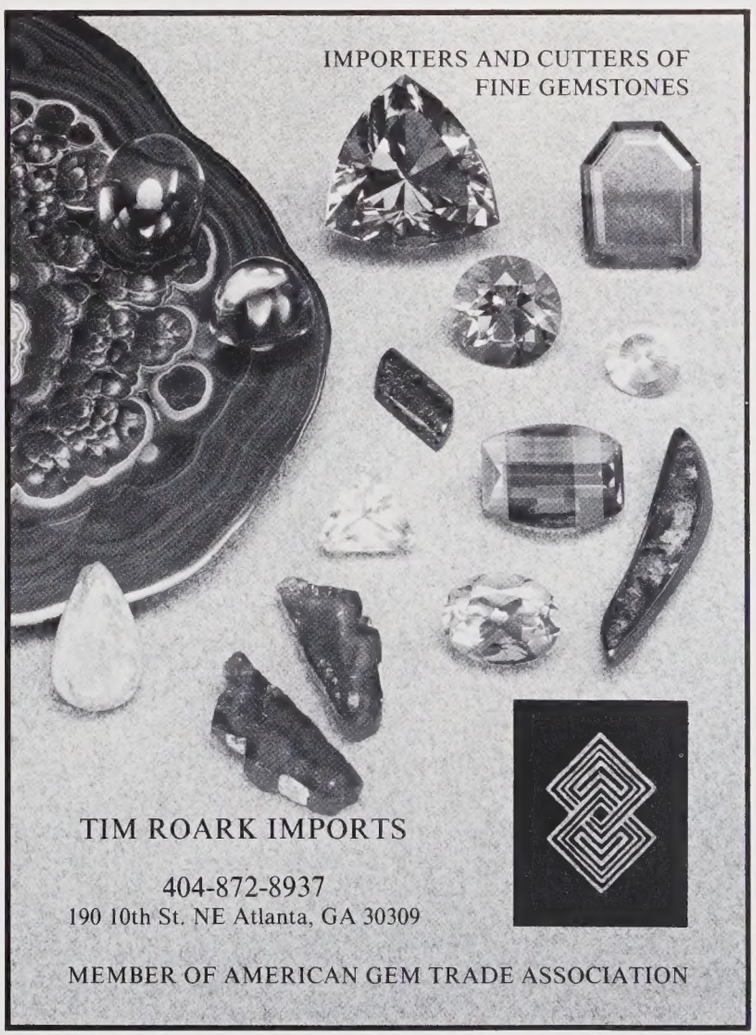

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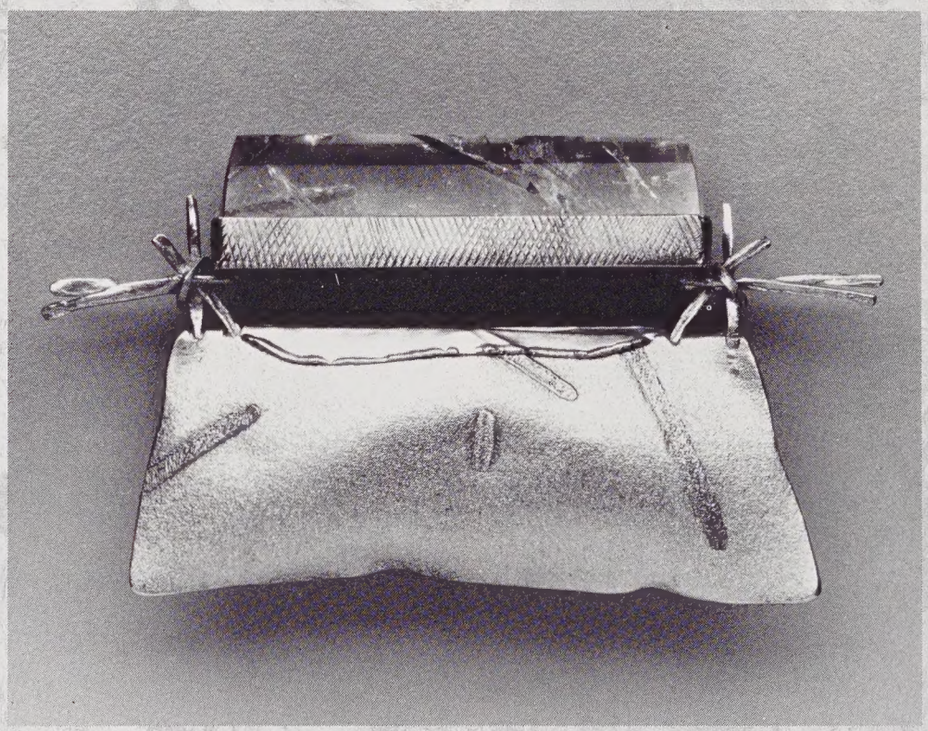

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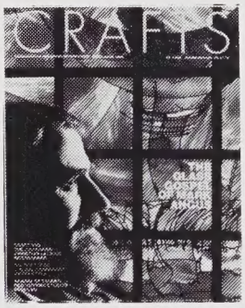

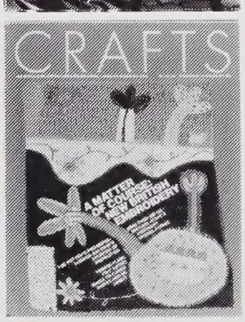

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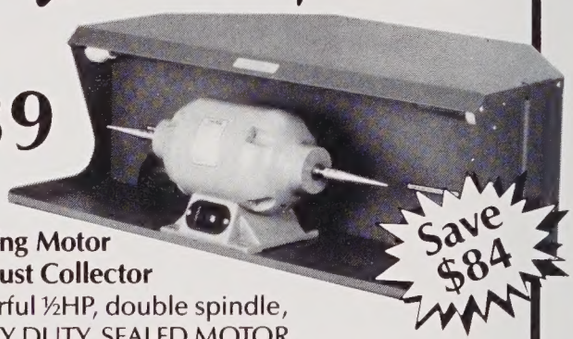

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The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary gold- and silversmithing. SNAG serves as a forum for the free exchange of ideas in the field.

Technical information, esthetic and educational issues, and other topics of interest to the practioner and teacher of contemporary metalwork are disseminated by SNAG publications and conferences. Professionals and students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts will all find SNAG interesting and useful. From pure sculpture to production jewelry. SNAG offers information on the entire range of the exciting field of metalsmithing.

SERVICES

Each year, SNAG conducts a conference that attracts jewelers and silversmiths from all over the world. Major figures in the field speak on a multitude of topics. Each conference is held in a different location to allow the widest audience possible access to these lively and stimulating gatherings.

Periodically, SNAG sponsors major exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. In the past, SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and the Phoenix Museum of Art. A special exhibition of work by Distinguished Members traveled to major museums in Europe in 1979.

The Society operates a book ordering service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

SNAG also operates a slide library and rental service, which contains the portfolios of Distinguished Members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent or purchase slices at minimal cost.

PUBLICATIONS

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Prominent jewelers and designers, silversmiths, blacksmiths and sculptors are featured in full-length articles. Process and technique are explored in essays on design and production, materials and equipment. Regular columns by leading authorities discuss the latest gallery shows, newest books and current museum exhibitions.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, workshops, conferences and job opportunities from all across the U.S. and Canada.

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